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THE HIGH  
HISTORY OF  
THE HOLY  
GRAAL  
TRANSLATED  
FROM THE  
FRENCH BY  
SEBASTIAN  
EVANS &  
VOL. TWO





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# THE HIGH HISTORY OF THE HOLY GRAAL

## BRANCH XVI

### TITLE I

**T**HIS High History saith that Messire **Evil**  
Gawain and Lancelot were repaired to **tidings**  
the court of King Arthur from the quest they  
had achieved. The King made great joy there-  
of and the Queen. King Arthur sate one day at  
meat by the side of the Queen, and they had been  
served of the first meats. Thereupon come two  
knights all armed, and each bore a dead knight  
before him, and the knights were still armed as  
they had been when their bodies were alive.  
'Sir,' say the knights, 'This shame and this  
mischief is yours. In like manner will you lose  
all your knights betimes and God love you not  
well enough to give counsel herein forthwith of  
His mercy.' 'Lords,' saith the King, 'How  
came these knights to be in so evil case?'  
'Sir,' say they, 'It is of good right you ought  
to know. The Knight of the Fiery Dragon is  
entered into the head of your land, and is  
destroying knights and castles and whatsoever  
he may lay hands on, in such sort that none  
durst contend against him, for he is taller by a

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**The** foot than any knight ever you had, and of gris-  
**Knight of** cheer, and so is his sword three times bigger  
 than the sword of ever another knight, and his  
 spear is well as heavy as a man may carry.  
 Two knights might lightly cover them of his  
 shield, and it hath on the outer side the head  
 of a dragon that casteth forth fire and flame when  
 soever he will, so eager and biting that none may  
 long endure his encounter.

## II

‘None other, how strong soever he be, may  
 stand against him, and, even as you see, hath he  
 burnt and evil-entreated all other knights that have  
 withstood him.’ ‘From what land hath come  
 such manner of man?’ ‘Sir,’ say the knights,  
 ‘He is come from the Giant’s castle, and he  
 warreth upon you for the love of Logrin the  
 Giant, whose head Messire Kay brought you  
 into your court, nor never, saith he, will I  
 have joy until such time as he shall have avenged  
 him on your body or upon the knight that you  
 love best.’ ‘Our Lord God,’ saith the King,  
 ‘will defend us from so evil a man.’ He  
 risen from the table, all scared, and makes  
 carry the two dead knights to be buried, and  
 the others turn back again when they have  
 told their message. The King calleth Messire  
 Gawain and Lancelot and asketh them what he  
 shall do of this knight that is entered into his  
 land? ‘By my head, I know not what to say  
 save you give counsel herein.’ ‘Sir,’ saith  
 Lancelot, ‘We will go against him, so please  
 you, I and Messire Gawain between us.’ ‘E

my head,' saith the King, 'I would not let you go for a kingdom, for such man as is this is no knight but a devil and a fiend that hath issued from the borders of Hell. I say not but that it were great worship and prize to slay and conquer him, but he that should go against him should set his own life in right sore jeopardy and run great hazard of being in as bad plight as these two knights I have seen.' The King was in such dismay that he knew not neither what to say nor to do, and so was all the court likewise in such sort as no knight neither one nor another was minded to go to battle with him, and so remained the court in great dismay.

the Fiery  
Dragon

## BRANCH XVII

### INCIPIT

**Perceval** **HERE** beginneth one of the master branches  
**fareth** of the Graal in the name of the Father  
**forth** and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

### TITLE I

Perceval had been with his mother as long as it pleased him. He hath departed with her good will and the good will of his sister, and telleth them he will return into the land as speedily as he may. He entereth into the great Lonely Forest, and rideth so far on his journeys that he cometh one day at the right hour of noon into a passing fair launde, and seeth a forest. He looketh amidst the launde and seeth a red cross. He looketh to the head of the launde and seeth a right comely knight sitting in the shadow of the forest, and he was clad in white garments and held a vessel of gold in his hand. At the other end of the launde he seeth a damsel likewise sitting, young and gentle and of passing great beauty, and she was clad in a white samite dropped of gold. Josephus telleth us by the divine scripture that out of the forest issued a beast, white as driven snow, and it was bigger than a fox and less than a hare. The beast came into the launde all scared, for she had twelve hounds in her



belly, that quested within like as it were hounds in a wood, and she fled adown the launde for fear of the hounds, the questing whereof she had within her. Perceval rested on the shaft of his spear to look at the marvel of this beast, whereof he had right great pity, so gentle was she of semblance, and of so passing beauty, and by her eyes it might seem that they were two emeralds. She runneth to the knight, all affrighted, and when she hath been there awhile and the hounds rend her again, she runneth to the damsel, but neither there may she stay long time, for the hounds that are within her cease not of their questing, whereof is she sore adread.

The  
Questing  
Beast

## II

She durst not venture herself in the forest. She seeth Perceval and so cometh toward him for protection. She maketh as though she would lie down on his horse's neck, and he holdeth forth his hands to receive her there so as that she might not hurt herself, and evermore the hounds quested. Howbeit the knight crieth out to him, 'Sir Knight, let the beast go and hold her not, for this belongeth neither to you nor to other, but let her dree her weird.' The beast seeth that no protection hath she. She goeth to the cross, and forthwith might the hounds no longer be in her, but issued forth all as it were live hounds, but nought had they of her gentleness nor her beauty. She humbled herself much among them and crouched on the ground and made semblant as though she would have cried them mercy, and gat herself as nigh

Perceval  
maketh  
him

## V

‘Are you so coward as you say?’ saith Perceval. ‘Yea,’ saith he, ‘And much more.’ ‘By my head,’ saith he, ‘I will make you hardy. Come now along with me, for sore pity is it that cowardice should harbour in so comely a knight. I am fain that your name be changed speedily, for such name beseemeth no knight.’ ‘Ha, Sir, for God’s sake, mercy! Now know I well that you desire to slay me! No will have I to change neither my courage nor my name!’ ‘By my head,’ saith Perceval, ‘Then will you die therefor, betimes!’ He maketh him go before him, will he or nill he; and the knight goeth accordingly with right sore grudging. They had scarce ridden away, when he heard in the forest off the way, two damsels that bewailed them right sore, and prayed our Lord God send them succour betimes.

## VI

Perceval cometh towards them, he and the knight he driveth before him perforce, and seeth a tall knight all armed that leadeth the damsels all dishevelled, and smiteth them from time to time with a great rod, so that the blood ran down their faces. ‘Ha, Sir Knight,’ saith Perceval, ‘What ask you of these two damsels that you entreat so churlishly?’ ‘Sir,’ saith he, ‘They have disherited me of mine own hold in this forest that Messire Gawain gave them.’ ‘Sir,’ say they to Perceval, ‘This knight is a

ber, and none other but he now wonneth in this be his  
rest, for the other robber-knights were slain champion  
Messire Gawain and Lancelot and another  
night that came with them, and, for the sore  
ffering and poverty that Messire Gawain and  
ancelot saw in us aforetime, and in the house  
my brother in whose castle they lay, were  
ey fain to give us this hold and the treasure  
ey conquered from the robber-knights, and  
r this doth he now lead us away to slay  
d destroy us, and as much would he do for  
u and all other knights, so only he had the  
wer.' 'Sir Knight,' saith Perceval, 'Let be  
ese damsels, for well I know that they say  
e, for that I was there when the hold was  
en them.' 'Then you helped to slay my  
ndred,' saith the knight, 'And therefore you  
I defy!' 'Ha,' saith the Knight Coward  
Perceval, 'Take no heed of that he saith, and  
x not wroth, but go your way!' 'Certes,'  
th Perceval, 'This will I not do: Rather  
ll I help to challenge the honour of the  
nsels.'

## VII

'Ha, Sir,' saith the Knight Coward, 'Never  
ll it be challenged of me!' Perceval  
weth him back. 'Sir,' saith he, 'See here  
champion that I set in my place.' The  
ober-knight moveth toward him, and smiteth  
n so sore on the shield that he breaketh his  
ear, but he might not unseat the Coward  
night, that sate still upright as aforehand in  
saddle-bows. He looketh at the other

The knight that hath drawn his sword.  
 Knight Knight Coward looketh on the one side  
 Coward the other, and would fain have fled and he d  
 But Perceval crieth to him: 'Knight, do  
 endeavour to save my honour and your  
 life and the honour of these two damse  
 And the robber-knight dealeth him a  
 buffet of his sword so as that it went nig  
 stup him altogether. Howbeit the Cow  
 Knight moveth not. Perceval looketh at  
 in wonderment and thinketh him that he  
 set too craven a knight in his place, and no  
 last knoweth well that he spake truth.  
 robber-knight smiteth him all over his b  
 and giveth him so many buffets that the kn  
 seeth his own blood. 'By my head,' saith  
 'You have wounded me, but you shall pay th  
 for, for I supposed not that you were minde  
 slay me!' He draweth his sword, that  
 sharp and strong, and smiteth his horse right  
 hard of his spurs, and catcheth the knight  
 his sword right in the midst of his breast  
 a sweep so strong that he beareth him to  
 ground beside his horse. He alighteth  
 him, unlaceth his ventail and smiteth down  
 coif, then striketh off his head and presented  
 to Perceval. 'Sir,' saith he, 'Here give I  
 of my first joust.' 'By my head,' said Perce  
 'Right dearly love I this present! Now  
 heed that you never again fall back into  
 cowardice wherein you have been. For  
 too sore shame to a knight!' 'Sir,' saith  
 'I will not, but never should I have belie  
 that one could become hardy so speedily,

therwise long ago would I have become so, and so should I have had worship and honour hereof, for many a knight hath held me in contempt herein, that elsewhere would have honoured me.' Perceval answereth that right and reason it is that worshipful men should be more honoured than the other. 'I commend these two damsels to your protection, and lead them to their hold in safety, and be at their pleasure and their will, and so say everywhere that you have for name the Knight Hardy, for more of courtesy hath this name than the other.' 'Sir,' saith he, 'You say true, and you have I to thank for the name.' The damsels give great thanks to Perceval, and take leave of him, and so go their way with right good will toward the knight that goeth with them on account of the knight he had slain, so that hereof called they him the Knight Hardy.

## VIII

Perceval departeth from the place where the knight lieth dead, and rideth until that he draweth nigh to Cardoil where King Arthur was, and findeth the country round in sore error and dismay. Much he marvelleth wherefor it may be, and demandeth of some of the meaner sort wherefore they are in so sore affright. 'Doth the King, then, live no longer?' 'Sir,' say the most part, 'Yea, he is there within in this castle, but never was he so destroyed nor so scared as he is at this present. For a knight warreth upon him

becometh  
the  
Knight  
Hardy

Perceval against whom no knight in the world  
at the endure.' Perceval rideth on until he com  
court before the master hall, and is alighted on  
mounting-stage. Lancelot and Messire Gawain  
come to meet him and make much joy of him  
as do the King and Queen and all they of  
court; and they made disarm him and do upon  
him a right rich robe. They that had never  
seen him before looked upon him right fairly  
for the worship and valour of his knighthood.  
The court also was rejoiced because of him,  
sore troubled had it been. So as the King  
sate one day at meat, there came four knights  
into the hall, and each one of them bore before  
him a dead knight. And their feet and arms  
had been stricken off, but their bodies were  
still all armed, and the habergeons thereon were  
all black as though they had been blasted  
lightning. They laid the knights in the middle  
of the hall. 'Sir,' say they to the King,  
'Once more is made manifest this shame that  
done you that is not yet amended. The Knight  
the Dragon destroyeth you your land and slayeth  
your men and cometh as nigh us as he may, and  
saith that in your court shall never be found  
knight so hardy as that he durst abide him  
assault him.' Right sore shame hath the King  
these tidings, and Messire Gawain and Lancelot  
likewise. Right sorrowful are they of heart  
for that the King would not allow them to go  
thither. The four knights turn back again and  
leave the dead knights in the hall, but the King  
maketh them be buried with the others.

## IX

Damsel  
of the  
Bier

A great murmuring ariseth amongst the knights in the hall, and the most part say mainly that they never heard tell of none that slew knights in such cruel sort, nor so many as did he; and that neither Messire Gawain nor Lancelot ought to be blamed for that they went not thither, for no knight in the world might conquer such a man and our Lord God did not, for he casteth forth fire and flame from his shield whensoever him listeth. And while this murmur was going on between the knights all round about the hall, behold you therewithal the Damsel that made bear the knight in the horse-bier and cometh before the King. 'Sir,' with she, 'I pray and beseech you that you do me right in your court. See, here is Messire Gawain that was at the assembly in the Red Gaunde where were many knights, and among them was the son of the Widow Lady, that I see sitting beside you. He and Messire Gawain were they that won the most prize of the assembly. This knight had white arms, and every of the assembly said that he had better done than Messire Gawain, for that he had been first in the assembly. It had been granted me, before the assembly began, that he that should do best thereat, should avenge the knight. Sir, I have sought for him until I have now found him at your court. Wherefore I pray and beseech you that you bid him do so much therein as that he be not blamed, for Messire Gawain well knoweth that I have spoken true.'

**Elinant** But the knight departed so soon from  
**of Escavalon** assembly, that I knew not what had become  
 him, and Messire Gawain was right heavy  
 that he had departed, for he was in quest  
 him, but knew him not.'

## X

'Damsel,' saith Messire Gawain, 'Truth  
 is that he it was that did best at the assembly  
 the Red Launde, and moreover, please C  
 well will he fulfil his covenant towards y  
 'Messire Gawain,' saith Perceval, 'Meseem  
 you did best above all other.' 'By my fa  
 saith Messire Gawain, 'You speak of y  
 courtesy, but howsoever I or other may i  
 done, you had the prize therein by the ju  
 ment of the knights. Of so much may I  
 call upon the damsel to bear witness.' 'S  
 saith she, 'Gramercy! He ought not to d  
 me that I require of him. For the knight  
 I have so long followed about and borne c  
 bier was son of his uncle Elinant of Escaval

## XI

'Damsel,' saith Perceval, 'Take heed  
 you speak truth. I know well that Elinar  
 Escavalon was my uncle on my father's s  
 but of his son know I nought.' 'Sir,' s  
 she, 'Of his deeds well deserved he to  
 known, for by his great valour and hardin  
 came he by his death, and he had to n  
 Alein of Escavalon. The Damsel of  
 Circlet of Gold loved him of passing great  
 with all her might. The comeliest knight



s ever seen of his age was he, and had he  
 ed longer would have been one of the best  
 ights known, and of the great love she had  
 him made she his body be embalmed when the  
 ight of the Dragon had slain him, he that is  
 cruel and maketh desolate all the lands and  
 the islands. The Damsel of the Circlet of  
 old hath he defied in such sort that already  
 h he slain great part of her knights, and she  
 held fast in her castle, so that she durst not  
 e forth, insomuch that all the knights that  
 there say, and the Lady of the castle also,  
 t he that shall avenge this knight shall have  
 Circlet of Gold, that never before was she  
 ding to part withal, and the fairest guerdon  
 l that be that any knight may have.

The  
 Knight  
 of the  
 Dragon

## XII

'Sir,' saith she, 'Well behoveth you, there-  
 e, to do your best endeavour to avenge your  
 le's son, and to win the Circlet of Gold,  
 , and you slay the knight, you will have saved  
 land of King Arthur that he threateneth to  
 ke desolate, and all the lands that march  
 h his own, for no King hateth he so much  
 King Arthur on account of the head of the  
 ant whereof he made such joy at his court.'  
 'Damsel,' saith Perceval, 'Where is the Knight  
 the Dragon?' 'Sir,' saith she, 'He is in  
 isles of the Elephants that wont to be the  
 best land and the richest in the world. Now  
 h he made it all desolate, they say, in such  
 t that none durst inhabit there, and the

**The** island wherein he abideth is over against  
**three** castle of the Damsel of the Golden Circlet,  
**best** that every day she seeth him carry knights  
**knights** bodily from the forest that he slayeth  
 smiteth limb from limb, whereof hath she ri  
 sore grief at heart.'

## XIII

Perceval heareth this that the damsel tell  
 him, and marvelleth much thereat, and tak  
 thought within himself, sith that the advent  
 is thus thrown upon him, that great blame  
 he have thereof and he achieve it not.  
 taketh leave of the King and Queen, and  
 goeth his way and departeth from the Co  
 Messire Gawain departeth and Lancelot w  
 him, and say they will bear him company  
 the piece of ground, and they may go thith  
 Perceval holdeth their fellowship right de  
 The King and Queen have great pity  
 Perceval, and say all that never until now  
 knight went into jeopardy so sore, and that s  
 loss to the world will it be if there he sho  
 die. They send to all the hermits and worsh  
 ful men in the forest of Cardoil and bid th  
 pray for Perceval that God defend him fr  
 this enemy with whom he goeth forth to  
 battle. Lancelot and Messire Gawain go w  
 him by the strange forests and by the islar  
 and found the forests all void and desolate  
 wasted in place after place. The Dan  
 followeth them together with the dead knig  
 And so far have they wandered that they co  
 into the plain country before the forest.

they looked before them and saw a castle that was seated in the plain without the forest, and they saw that it was set in a right fair meadow-land and was surrounded of great running waters and girdled of high walls, and had within great halls with windows. They draw nigh the castle and see that it turneth all about faster than the wind may run, and it had at the top the archers of crossbows of copper that draw their shafts so strong that no armour in the world might avail against the stroke thereof. Together with them were men of copper that turned and sounded their horns so passing loud that the ground all seemed to quake. And under the gateway were lions and bears chained, that roared with so passing great might and fury that all the ground and the valley resounded thereof. The knights draw rein and look at this marvel. 'Lords,' saith the damsel, 'Now may you see the Castle of Great Endeavour. Messire Gawain and Lancelot, draw you back, and come not nigher the archers, for otherwise ye be but dead men. And you, Sir,' saith she to Perceval, 'And you would enter into this castle, lend me your spear and shield, and so will I bear them before for warranty, and you come after me and make such countenance as good knight should, and so shall you pass hrough into the castle. But your fellows may well draw back, for now is not the hour for hem to pass. None may pass thither save only he that goeth to vanquish the knight and win the Golden Circlet and the Graal, and do away the false law with its horns of copper.'

The  
Castle  
of En-  
deavour

Grant  
Defence  
Imprison

The  
Turning  
Castle

## XIV

Perceval is right sorrowful when he heareth the damsel say that Messire Gawain and Lancelot may not pass in thither with him albeit they are the best knights in the world. He taketh leave of them full sorrowfully, and they also depart sore grudgingly; but they pray him right sweetly, so Lord God allow him escape alive from the place whither he goeth, that he will meet them again at some time and place, and at ease, in such sort as that they may see him without discognisance. They wait awhile to watch the Good Knight, that hath yielded his shield and spear to the damsel. She hath set his shield on the bier in front, then pointeth out to them of the castle all openly the shield that belonged to the Good Soldier; after that, she maketh sign that it belongeth to the knight that is there waiting behind her. Perceval was without shield in the saddle-bows, and holdeth his sword drawn and planteth him stiffly in the stirrups after such sort as maketh them creak again and his horse's chine swerve awry. After that, he looketh at Lancelot and Messire Gawain. 'Lords,' saith he, 'To the Saviour of the World commend I you.' And they answer, 'May He that endured pain of His body on the Holy True Cross protect him in his body and his soul and his life.' With that he smiteth with his spurs and goeth his way to the castle as fast as his horse may carry him,—toward the Turning Castle. He smiteth with his sword at the gate s

passing strongly that he cut a good three fingers into a shaft of marble. The lions and the beast that were chained to guard the gate slink away into their dens and the castle stoppeth at once. The archers cease to shoot. There were three bridges before the castle that up-lifted themselves so soon as he was beyond.

Perceval  
entereth  
there-  
into

## XV

Lancelot and Messire Gawain departed thence when they had beholden the marvel, but they were fain to go toward the castle when they saw it stop turning. But a knight cried out to them from the battlements, 'Lords, and you come forward, the archers will shoot and the castle will turn, and the bridges be lowered again, wherefore you would be deceived herein.' They draw back, and hear made within the greatest joy that ever was heard, and they hear how the most part therewithin say that now is he come of whom they shall be saved in twofold wise,—saved as of life, and saved as of soul, so God grant him to vanquish the knight that seareth the spirit of the devil. Lancelot and Messire Gawain turn them back thoughtful and all heavy for that they may not pass into the castle, for none other passage might they see than this. So they ride on, until that they draw nigh the Waste City where Lancelot slew the knight. 'Ha,' saith he to Messire Gawain, 'Now is the time at hand that behoveth me to lie in this Waste City, and God grant not ousel herein.' He told Messire Gawain all the truth of that which had befallen him therein.

**Lancelot** So, even as he would have taken leave of him,  
**is re-** behold you, the Poor Knight of the Waste  
**spited** Castle!

## XVI

‘Sir,’ saith he to Lancelot, ‘I have taken respite of you in the city within there, of the knight that you slew, until forty days after that the Graal shall be achieved, nor have I issued forth of the castle wherein you harboured you until now, nor should I now have come forth had I not seen you come for fulfilling of your pledge, nor never shall I come forth again until such time as you shall return hither on the day I have named to you. And so, gramercy to you and Messire Gawain for the horses you sent me, that were a right great help to us, and for the treasure and the hold you have given to my sisters that were sore poverty-stricken. But I may not do otherwise than abide in my present poverty until such time as you shall be returned, on the day whereunto I have taken respite for you, sore against the will of your enemies, for the benefits you have done me. Wherefore I pray you forget me not, for the saving of your loyalty.’ ‘By my head,’ saith Lancelot, ‘That will I not, and gramercy for having put off the day for love of me.’ They depart from the knight and come back again toward Cardoil where King Arthur was.

## BRANCH XVIII

### TITLE I

**H**ERE the story is silent of Lancelot and Virgil Messire Gawain, and saith that Perceval his craft is in the Turning Castle, whereof Joseus recounteth the truth, to wit, that Virgil founded it in the air by his wisdom in such fashion, when the philosophers went on the Quest of the Earthly Paradise, and it was prophesied that the castle should not cease turning until such time as the Knight should come thither that should have a head of gold, the look of a lion, a heart of steel, the navel of a virgin maiden, conditions without wickedness, the valour of a man and faith and belief of God; and that this knight should bear the shield of the Good Soldier that took down the Saviour of the World from hanging on the rood. It was prophesied, moreover, that all they of the castle and all other castles whereof this one was the guardian should hold the old law until such time as the Good Knight should come, by whom their souls should be saved and their death respited. For, so soon as he should come, they should run to be baptized and should firmly believe the new law. Wherefore is the joy great in the castle for that their death should now be respited, and that they

The Island of Elephants should be released of all terror of the knight that was their foe, whom they dreaded even to the death, and of the sin of the false law whereof they had heretofore been attaint.

## II

Right glad is Perceval when he seeth the people of the castle turn them to the holy faith of the Saviour, and the damsel saith to him 'Sir, right well have you speeded thus far on your way; nought is there now to be done save to finish that which remaineth. For never may they that are within issue forth so long as the Knight of the Dragon is on live. Here may you not tarry, for the longer you tarry, the more lands will be desolate and the more folk will he slay.' Perceval taketh leave of them of the castle, that make much joy of him, but sore misgiving have they of him on account of the knight with whom he goeth to do battle and they say that if he shall conquer him, never yet befell knight so fair adventure. They have heard mass before that he departeth, and made rich offerings for him in honour of the Saviour and His sweet Mother. The damsel goeth before, for that she knew the place where the evil knight had his repair. They ride until they come into the Island of Elephants. The Knight was alighted under an olive tree, and had but now since slain four knights that were of the castle of the Queen of the Golden Circle. She was at the windows of her castle and saw her knights dead, whereof made she great dolor. 'Ha, God,' saith she, 'Shall I never see nor



that may avenge me of this evil-doer that slayeth my men and destroyeth my land on this wise?' She looketh up and seeth Perceval come and the damsel. 'Sir Knight, and you have not force and help and valour in you more than is in four knights, come not nigh this devil! Howbeit, and you feel that you may so do battle as to overcome and vanquish him, I will give you the Golden Circlet that is within, and will hold with the New Law that hath been of late established. For I see well by your shield that you are a Christian, and, so you may conquer him, then ought I at last to be assured that your law availeth more than doth ours, and that God was born of the Virgin.'

The  
Queen  
of the  
Circlet

### III

Right joyous is Perceval of this that he heareth her say. He crosseth and blesseth him, and commendeth him to God and His sweet Mother, and is pricked of wrath and hardiment like a lion. He seeth the Knight of the Dragon mounted, and looketh at him in wonderment, for that he was so big that never had he seen any man so big of his body. He seeth the shield at his neck, that was right black and huge and hideous. He seeth the Dragon's head in the midst thereof, that casteth out fire and flame in great plenty, so foul and hideous and horrible that all the field stank thereof. The damsel draweth her toward the knight and leaveth the knight on the horse-bier upon the plain.

The  
Knight  
of the

## IV

‘Sir,’ saith she to Perceval, ‘On this level plot was slain your uncle’s son whom here I leave, for I have brought him far enough. Now avenge him as best you may, I render and give him over to you, for so much have I done herein as that none hath right to blame me.’ With that she departeth. The Knight of the Dragon removeth and seeth Perceval coming all alone, wherefore hath he great scorn of him and deigneth not to take his spear, but rather cometh at him with his drawn sword, that was right long and red as a burning brand. Perceval seeth him coming and goeth against him, spear in rest, as hard as his horse may carry him, thinking to smite him through the breast. But the Knight setteth his shield between, and the flame that issued from the Dragon burnt the shaft thereof even to his hand. And the Knight smiteth him on the top of his helmet, but Perceval covereth him of his shield, whereof had he great affiance that the sword of the foeman knight might not harm it. Josephus witnesseth us that Joseph of Abarimacie had made be sealed in the boss of the shield some of the blood of Our Lord and a piece of His garment.

## V

When the Knight seeth that he hath not hurt Perceval’s shield, great marvel hath he thereof, for never aforetime had he smitten knight but he had dealt him his death-blow.

He turneth the head of the Dragon toward **Burning**  
Perceval's shield, but the flame that issued from **Dragon**  
the Dragon's head turned back again as had it  
been blown of the wind, so that it might not  
come nigh him. The Knight is right wroth  
thereof, and passeth beyond and cometh to the  
bier of the dead knight and turneth his shield  
with the dragon's head against him. He  
scorcheth and burneth all to ashes the bodies  
of the knight ~~and the horses~~. Saith he to  
Perceval, 'Are you <sup>now</sup> quit ~~as~~ for this knight's  
burial?' 'Certes,' saith Perceval, 'You say  
true, and much misliketh me thereof, but please  
God, I shall amend it.'

## VI

The damsel that had brought the knight  
was at the windows of the palace beside the  
Queen. She crieth out. 'Perceval, fair sir,'  
saith the damsel, 'Now is the shame the greater  
and the harm the greater, and you amend them  
not.' Right sorrowful is Perceval of his  
cousin that is all burnt to a cinder, and he seeth  
the Knight that beareth the devil with him, but  
knoweth not how he may do vengeance upon  
him. He cometh to him sword drawn, and  
dealeth him a great blow on the shield in such  
sort that he cleaveth it right to the midst thereof  
where the dragon's head was, and the flame  
leapeth forth so burning hot on his sword that  
it waxed red-hot like as was the Knight's  
sword. And the damsel crieth to him: 'Now  
is your sword of the like power as his; now  
shall it be seen what you will do! I have been

Perceval told of a truth that the Knight may not tell his vanquished save by one only and at one blow victory but how this is I may not tell, whereof irked me.' Perceval looketh and seeth that his sword is all in a flame of fire, whereof much he marvelleth. He smiteth the Knight with a passing sore that he maketh his head stoop down over the fore saddle-bow. The Knight righteth him again, sore wrath that he may not put him to the worse. He smiteth him with his sword a blow so heavy that he cleaveth the habergeon and his right shoulder so as that he cutteth and burneth the flesh to the bone. As he draweth back his blow, Perceval catches him and striketh with such passing strength that he smiteth off his hand, sword and all. The Knight gave a great roar, and the Queen was right joyous thereof. The Knight natheless made no semblant that he was yet conquered but turneth back toward Perceval at a right great gallop and launcheth his flame against his shield, but it availeth him nought, for he might not harm it. Perceval seeth the dragon's head that was broad and long and horrible, and he aimeth with his sword and thrusteth it up to the hilt into his gullet as straight as ever he may and the head of the dragon hurleth forth a cry so huge that forest and fell resound thereof as far as two leagues Welsh.

## VII

The dragon's head turneth it toward the lord in great wrath, and scorcheth him and burneth him to dust, and thereafter departeth

up into the sky like lightning. The Queen cometh to Perceval, and all the knights, and see that he is sore hurt in his right shoulder. And the damsel telleth him that never will he be healed thereof save he setteth thereon of the dust of the knight that is dead. And they lead him up to the castle with right great joy. Then they make him be disarmed, and have his wound washed and tended and some of the knight's dust that was dead set thereon that it might have healing. She maketh send to all the knights of her land: 'Lords,' saith she, 'See here the knight that hath saved my land for me and protected your lives. You know well how it hath been prophesied that the knight with head of gold should come, and that through him should you be saved. And now, behold, hath he come hither. The prophecy may not be belied. I will that you do his commandment.' And they said that so would they do right willingly. She bringeth him there where the Circlet of Gold is, and she herself setteth it on his head. After that, she bringeth his sword and delivereth it unto him, wherewith he had slain the giant devil, both the knight that bare the devil and the devil that the knight bare in his shield.

The Queen  
is bap-  
tized

## VIII

'Sir,' saith she, 'May all they that will not go to be baptized, nor accept your New Law, be slain of this your sword, and hereof I make you the gift.' She herself made her be held up and baptized first, and all the other after.

**The** Josephus maketh record that in right baptism  
**Castle of** she had for name Elysa, and a good life she  
**Copper** led and right holy, and she died a virgin. Her  
body still lieth in the kingdom of Ireland, where  
she is highly honoured. Perceval was within  
the castle until that he was heal. The tidings  
spread throughout the lands that the Knight of  
the Golden Circlet had slain the Knight of the  
Dragon, and great everywhere was the joy  
thereof. It was known at the court of King  
Arthur, but much marvelled they that it was  
said the Knight of the Golden Circlet had slain  
him, for they knew not who was the Knight of  
the Golden Circlet.

## IX

When Perceval was whole, he departed from  
the castle of the Queen of the Golden Circlet,  
all of whose land was at his commandment.  
The Queen told him that she would keep the  
Golden Circlet until he should will otherwise,  
and in such sort he left it there, for he would  
not carry it with him, sith that he knew not  
whitherward he might turn. The history  
telleth us that he rode on until one day he  
came to the Castle of Copper. Within the  
castle were a number of folk that worshipped  
the bull of copper and believed not in any other  
God. The bull of copper was in the midst of  
the castle upon four columns of copper, and  
bellowed so loud at all hours of the day that it  
was heard for a league all round about, and  
there was an evil spirit within that gave answers  
concerning whatsoever any should ask of it.

## X

Men of  
copper

At the entrance to the gateway of the castle were two men made of copper by the art of nigromancy, and they held two great mallets of iron, and they busied themselves striking the one after the other, and so strongly they struck that nought mortal is there in the world that might pass through amongst their blows but should be all to-crushed thereby. And on the other side was the castle so fast enclosed about that nought might enter thereinto.

## XI

Perceval beholdeth the fortress of the castle, and the entrance that was so perilous, whereof he marvelleth much. He passeth a bridge that was within the entry, and cometh nigh them that guard the gate. A Voice began to cry aloud above the gate that he might go forward safely, and that he need have no care for the men of copper that guarded the gate nor be affrighted of their blows, for no power had they to harm such a knight as was he. He comforteth himself much of that the Voice saith to him. He cometh anigh the serjeants of copper, and they cease to strike at once, and hold their iron mallets quite still. And he entereth into the castle, where he findeth within great plenty of folk that all were misbelievers ~~and of feeble belief~~. He seeth the bull of copper in the midst of the castle right big and horrible, that was surrounded on all sides by folk that all did worship thereunto together round about.

The  
copper  
bull

## XII

The bull bellowed so passing loud that right unneath was it to hear aught else within the castle besides. Perceval was therewithin, but none was there that spake unto him, for so intent were they upon adoring the bull that, and any had been minded to slay them what time they were yet worshipping the same, they would have allowed him so to do and would have thought that they were saved thereby; and save this had they none other believe in the world. It was not of custom within there to be armed, for the entrance of the fortress was so strong that none might enter but by their will and commandment, save it were the pleasure of our Lord God. And the devil that had deceived them, and in whom they believed, gave them such great abundance therewithin of everything they could desire, that nought in the world was there whereof they lacked. When he perceived that they held no discourse with him, he draweth himself on one side by a great hall, and so called them around him. The more part came thither, but some of them came not. The Voice warneth him that he make them all pass through the entrance of the gateway there where the men with the iron mallets are, for there may he well prove which of them are willing to believe in God and which not. The Good Knight draweth his sword and surroundeth them all and maketh them all go in common before him, would they or nould they. And they that would not go willingly and kindly might be sure



that they should receive their death. He made them pass through the entrance there where the serjeants of copper were striking great blows with their iron mallets. Of one thousand five hundred that there were, scarce but thirteen were not all slain and brained of the iron mallets. But the thirteen had firmly bound their belief in Our Lord, wherefore the serjeants took no heed of them.

The  
River  
of Hell

## XIII

The evil spirit that was in the bull of copper issued forth thereof as it had been lightning from heaven, and the bull of copper melted all in a heap so as that nought remained in that place thereof. Then the thirteen that remained sent for a hermit of the forest and so made themselves be held up and baptized. After that, they took the bodies of the misbelievers and made cast them into a water that is called the River of Hell. This water runneth into the sea, so say many that have seen it, and there where it pendeth itself in the sea is it most foul and most horrible, so that scarce may ship pass that is not wrecked.

## XIV

Josephus maketh record that the hermit that baptized the thirteen had the name of Denis, and that the castle was named the Castle of the Trial. They lived within there until the New Law was assured and believed in throughout all the kingdoms, and a right good life led they and

**King** a holy. Nor never might none enter with them  
**Hermit** thereinto but was slain and crushed save he  
firmly believed in God. When the thirteen  
that were baptized in the castle issued forth  
thereof they scattered themselves on every side  
among strange forests, and made hermitages and  
buildings, and put their bodies to penance for the  
false law they had maintained and to win the  
love of the Saviour of the World.

## XV

Perceval, as you may hear, was soldier o  
Our Lord, and well did God show him how H  
loved his knighthood, for the Good Knight ha  
much pain and sore travail and pleased Him  
greatly. He was come one day to the hous  
of King Hermit that much desired to see him  
and made much joy of him when he saw him  
and rejoiced greatly of his courage. Perceval  
relateth to him all the greater adventures th  
have befallen him at many times and in man  
places sithence that he departed from him, an  
King Hermit much marvelleth him of many  
'Uncle,' saith Perceval, 'I marvel me much  
an adventure that befell me at the outlet of  
forest; for I saw a little white beast that  
found in the launde of the forest, and twelv  
hounds had she in her belly, that bayed alo  
and quested within her. At last they issu  
forth of her and slew her beside the cross th  
was at the outlet of the forest, but they mig  
not eat of her flesh. A knight and a dams  
whereof one was at one end of the launde a

the other at the other, came thither and took the King  
 flesh and the blood, and set them in two vessels Hermit  
 of gold. And the hounds that were born of preacheth  
 her fled away into the forest.' 'Fair nephew,'  
 saith the Hermit, 'I know well that God loveth  
 you sith that such things appear to you, for His  
 valour and yours and for the chastity that is in  
 your body. The beast, that was kindly and  
 gentle and sweet, signifieth Our Lord Jesus  
 Christ, and the twelve dogs that yelped within  
 her signify the people of the Old Law that God  
 created and made in His own likeness, and after  
 that He had made and created them He  
 desired to prove how much they loved Him.  
 He sent them forty years into the wilderness,  
 where their garments never wasted, and sent  
 them manna from heaven that served them what-  
 soever they would to eat and to drink, and they  
 were without evil and without trouble and with-  
 out sickness, and such joy and pleasance had they  
 as they would. And they held one day their  
 council, and the master of them said that and  
 God should wax wroth with them and withhold  
 this manna, they would have nought to eat, and  
 that it might not last always albeit that God  
 sent it in so passing great plenty. Wherefore  
 they purposed to set aside great part thereof in  
 store, so that if the Lord God should wax  
 wroth they might take of that which was stored  
 and so save themselves for a long space. They  
 agreed among themselves and did thereafter  
 as they had purposed and determined amongst  
 hem.

Of the  
Jews

## XVI

‘God, that seeth and knoweth all things, knew well their thought. He withdrew from them the manna from heaven that had come to them in such abundance, and which they had bestowed in caverns underground, thinking to find there the manna they had set aside, but it was changed by the will of God into efts and adders and worms and vermin, and when they saw that they had done evil, they scattered themselves over strange lands. Fair, sweet nephew,’ saith the Hermit, ‘These twelve hounds that bayed in the beast are the Jews that God had fed, and that were born in the Law that He established, nor never would they believe on Him, nor love Him, but rather crucified Him and tore His Body after the shamefullest sort they might, but in no wise might they destroy His flesh. The knight and damsel that set the pieces of flesh in vessels of gold signify the divinity of the Father, which would not that His flesh should be minished. The hounds fled to the forest and became savage what time they had torn the beast to pieces, so in like manner are the Jews that were and ever shall be savage, subject to them of the New Law henceforth for ever’

## XVII

‘Fair uncle,’ saith Perceval, ‘Good right and reason is it that they should have shame and tribulation and evil reward sith that they slew and crucified Him that had created and made them and deigned to be born as a man in their Law. But two priests came after, whereof the

one kissed the cross and worshipped it right heartily and made great joy thereof, and the other did violence thereunto and beat it with a great rod, and wept right sore and made the greatest dole in the world. With this last was I right sore wrath, and willingly would I have run upon him had he not been a priest.' 'Fair nephew,' saith the Hermit, 'He that beat it believed in God equally as well as he that adored, for that the holy flesh of the Saviour of the World was set thereon, that abhorred not the pains of death. One smiled and made great joy for that He redeemed His souls from the pains of hell that would otherwise have been therein for evermore; and for this made he yet greater joy, that he knew He was God and Man everlastingly in His nature, for he that hath not this in remembrance shall never believe aright. Fair nephew, the other priest beat the cross and wept for the passing great anguish and torment and dolour that our Lord God suffered thereon, or so sore was the anguish as might have melted the rock, nor no tongue of man may tell the sorrow He felt upon the cross. And therefore did he beat it and revile it for that He was crucified thereon, even as I might hate a spear or sword wherewith you had been slain. For nought else did he thus, and ever, so often as he remembereth the pain that God suffered thereon, cometh he to the cross in such manner as you saw. Both twain are hermits and dwell in the forest, and he is named Jonas that kissed and adored the cross, and he that beat and reviled it is named Alexis.'

Of the  
two  
priests

Of the  
Fiery  
Dragon

## XVIII

Willingly heareth Perceval this that his uncle telleth and recordeth him. He relateth how he did battle with the devil-knight that bare in his shield the head of a dragon that cast forth fire and flame, and how the dragon burnt up his lord at the last. 'Fair nephew,' saith the Hermit, 'Right glad am I of these tidings that you tell me, for I have been borne on hand that the Knight of the Golden Circlet had slain him.' 'Sir,' saith Perceval, 'It may well be, but never at any time saw I knight so big and horrible.' 'Fair nephew,' saith the Hermit, 'None might overcome him save the Good Knight only, for all true worshipful men behoveth do battle with the Devil, nor never may he be worshipful man that fighteth not against him. And even as the devil withal that was figured on his shield slew and burnt up his master, even so doth one devil torment and molest other in the world to come; and greater evil might not the Knight of the Devil do you than burn the body of your uncle's son that he had killed, as I have heard tell. Power had he over his body, but, please God, not over his soul to burn it.' 'Fair uncle,' saith Perceval, 'I went thither by a Turning Castle, where were archers of copper that shot bolts, and bears and lions chained at the entrance of the gateway. So soon as I drew nigh and smote thereon with my sword the castle stopped still.' 'Fair nephew,' saith King Hermit, 'Nought had the Devil outwardly besides this

castle. It was the entrance to his fortress, nor would they within ever have been converted save you had been there.' 'Sir,' saith he, 'Right sorrowful am I of Messire Gawain and Lancelot, for well I loved their fellowship, and great aid would they have been in my need.' 'Fair nephew, had they been chaste as are you, well might they have entered on account of their good knighthood. For were they not wanton, the two best knights in the world are they.

The  
Great  
Quest

## XIX

'Fair nephew, in the time of your knighthood have you much advanced the Law of the Saviour, for you have destroyed the falsest believe in the world, and this was of them that believed on the bull of copper and the devil that was therein. If this folk had remained, and had failed of you, never would it have been destroyed until the end of the world. Wherefore marvel not that you have travail in serving God, but endure it willingly, for never had worshipful man honour without pains. But now behoveth you achieve another matter. All they of the land of King Fisherman your uncle have abandoned the New Law, and returned to that which God hath forbidden. But the most part do so rather perforce and for fear of the King that hath seized the land, who is my brother and your uncle, than on account of aught else. Wherefore behoveth you set counsel therein, for this thing may not be achieved by any earthly man save by you

**The** only. For the castle and land should be yours  
**Castle** of right, and sore mischief is it when one that  
**of the** cometh of lineage so high and so holy is traitor  
**Graal** to God, and disloyal to the world.

## XX

‘Fair nephew,’ saith the good man, ‘The castle hath been much strengthened, for there are now nine bridges newly made, and at each bridge are there three knights tall and strong and hardy, whereof hath he much defence, and your uncle is there within that keepeth the castle. But never sithence, none of the knights of King Fisherman nor of his priests have there appeared, nor knoweth any what hath befallen them. The chapel where the most Holy Graal appeared is all emptied (of its sacred hallows; the hermits that are by the forest are fain of your coming, for never see they there a knight pass by that believeth in God. And, so you shall have achieved this enterprise, it is a thing whereof shall God be well pleased.’

## XXI

‘Fair uncle,’ saith Perceval, ‘Thither will I go, sith that you commend it to me, for no reason is it that he should have the castle that hath entered thereinto. Of better right ought my mother to have it, that was the next-born to King Fisherman, of whose death am I right sorrowful.’ (‘Fair nephew, you are right! for on your account fell he into languishment, and, had you then gone again, so say many, then would he have been whole, but how this might



have been I know not of a certainty. But me-<sup>Hermits</sup> thinketh our Lord God willed his languishment <sup>Hæile</sup> and death, for had it been His will, you would <sup>discol</sup> have made the demand, but He willed otherwise, wherefore ought we to give thanks and praise Him whatsoever He doth, for He hath foreseen of every man that which shall come to him.) I have within here a white mule that is very old. Fair nephew, you will take her with you. She will follow you right willingly, and a banner shall you bear, for the power of God and His virtue shall avail more than your own. Seven-and-twenty knights guard the nine bridges, all chosen and of approved great valour, and none ought now to believe that a single knight may vanquish so many, save the miracle of Our Lord and His virtue shall open a way for him. So I pray and beseech you that you have God always in remembrance and His sweet Mother, and, so at any time you be put to the worse of your knighthood, mount upon the mule and take the banner, and your enemies shall forthwith lose their force, for nought confoundeth any enemy so swiftly as doth the virtue and puissance of God. It is a thing well known that you are the Best Knight of the World, but set not affiance in your strength nor in your knighthood as against so many knights, for against them may you not endure.'

## XXII

Perceval hearkeneth to his uncle's discourse and his chastening, and layeth fast hold on all that he saith, wherewith is he pleased full well,



**The** for great affiance hath he in his words. 'Fair  
**Casteth** nephew,' saith the Hermit, 'Two lions are  
 there at the entry of the gateway, whereof the  
 one is red and the other white. Put your trust  
 in the white, for he is on God's side, and look  
 at him whensoever your force shall fail you,  
 and he will look at you likewise in such sort as  
 that straightway you shall know his intent, by  
 the will and pleasure of Our Saviour. Where-  
 fore do according as you shall see that he  
 would, for no intent will he have save good  
 only, and to help you; nor may you not  
 otherwise succeed in winning past the nine  
 bridges that are warded of the twenty-seven  
 knights. And God grant you may win past in  
 such wise that you may save your body and set  
 forward withal the Law of Our Lord that your  
 uncle hath hindered all that he might.'

## XXIII

Perceval departeth from the hermitage, and  
 carrieth away the banner, according to his  
 uncle's counsel, and the white mule followeth  
 after. He goeth his way toward the land that  
 was the land of King Fisherman, and findeth a  
 hermit that was issued forth of his hermitage  
 and was going at a great pace through the  
 forest. He abideth so soon as he beholdeth  
 the cross on Perceval's shield. 'Sir,' saith  
 he, 'I well perceive that you are a Christian,  
 of whom not a single one have I seen this long  
 time past. For the King of Castle Mortal is  
 driving us forth of this forest, for he hath

enounced God and His sweet Mother, so that **Hermits**  
 re durst not remain in His defence.' 'By my **in exile**  
 with,' saith Perceval, 'But you shall! for God  
 shall lead you forward, and I after. Are there  
 more hermits in this forest?' saith Perceval.  
 Yea, Sir, there be twelve here that are waiting  
 for me at a cross yonder before us, and we are  
 minded to go to the kingdom of Logres and put  
 our bodies to penance for God's sake, and to  
 abandon our cells and chapels in this forest for  
 bread of this felon King that hath seized the  
 land, for he willeth that none who believeth in  
 God should here abide.'

## XXIV

Perceval is come with the hermit to the cross  
 where the good men had assembled them to-  
 gether, and findeth Joseus, the young man that  
 was King Pelles' son, of whom he maketh  
 right great joy, and he maketh the hermits turn  
 back again with him, saying that he will defend  
 them and make them safe, by God's help, in the  
 kingdom, and prayeth them right sweetly that  
 they make prayer for him to our Lord that He  
 grant him to win back that which of right is  
 his own. He is come forth of the forest and  
 the hermits with him. He draweth nigh to  
 the castle of King Fisherman, and strong was  
 the defence at the entrance thereof. Some of  
 the knights well knew that Perceval would  
 conquer him, for long since had it been pro-  
 phesied that he who bare such shield should win  
 the Graal of him that sold God for money.

66111

Another  
chapel

## XXV

The knights saw Perceval coming and t  
company of hermits with him right seemly  
behold, and much marvel had they there  
About a couple of bowshots above the brid  
was a chapel fashioned like the one at Camel  
wherein was a sepulchre, and none knew w  
lay therein. Perceval abideth thereby and l  
company. He leaneth his shield and spe  
against the chapel, and maketh fast his hor  
and mule by the reins. He beholdeth t  
sepulchre, that was right fair, and forthwith t  
sepulchre openeth and the joinings fall apart a  
the stone lifteth up in such wise that a m  
might see the knight that lay within, of wh  
came forth a smell of so sweet savour that  
seemed to the good men that were looking  
that it had been all embalmed. They found  
letter which testified that this knight was nam  
Josephus. So soon as the hermits beheld t  
sepulchre open, they said to Perceval: 'S  
now at last know we well that you are the Go  
Knight, the chaste, the holy.' The knigh  
that warded the bridge heard the tidings th  
the sepulchre had opened at the coming of t  
knight, whereof were they in the greater d  
may, and well understood that it was he th  
was first at the Graal. The tidings came  
the King that held the castle, and he bade l  
knights not be dismayed for dread of a sing  
knight, for that he would have no force r  
power against them, nor might it never bef  
but that one only of his own knights should  
enough to conquer him.

## XXVI

The nine  
bridges

Perceval was armed upon his horse. The hermits make the sign of the cross over him and bless him and commend him to God. And he holdeth his spear in rest and cometh toward the three knights that guard the first bridge. They set upon him at once and break their spears on his shield. One of them he smiteth with such force that he maketh him topple over into the river that runneth under the bridge, both man and his horse. Of him was he quit, for the river was wide and deep and swift. The others held out against him a much longer bout with sharp sword-play, but he vanquished them and smote them to pieces, and flung their bodies into the water. They of the second bridge came forward, that were right good knights, and many a tough bout had he of them and many a felon onslaught. Joseus that was his uncle's son was there, and said to the other hermits that right fainly would he go help him, but that he deemed it might be sin, and they bade him take no heed of that, for that great work of mercy would it be to destroy the enemies of Our Lord. He doeth off his grey robe and fettleth him in his frock, and taketh one of them that were doing battle with Perceval and trusseth him on his neck and so flingeth him into the river all armed, and Perceval slayeth the other twain and hurleth them into the river in like manner as the other.

The  
White  
Lion

## XXVII

By the time he had won the two bridges he was full spent and weary, wherefore he bethinketh him of the lion, the manner whereof his uncle told him. Then looketh he toward the entrance of the gateway and seeth the white lion, stood upright on his two hinder feet, for that was fain to see him. Perceval looketh him between the two eyes, and understandeth that the lion is minded by the will of God to do to wit that the knights of the third bridge so hardy and of such strength that they may be overcome of a single knight and our Lord God of his holy bounty open not the way, that he must fain take the mule and carry the banner if he would conquer them. Perceval understandeth the white lion's intent, and gives God thanks thereof and draweth him back, Joseus the young man likewise. As soon as they look back, they see that the first bridge already lifted up behind them.

## XXVIII

Perceval cometh to where the white lion was, and she was starred on the forehead with a red cross. He mounteth thereupon, and taketh the banner and holdeth his sword drawn. As soon as the white lion seeth him coming, unchaineth himself and runneth incontinently to the bridge that was lifted, right amidst the knights, and lowereth it forthwith. The king of Castle Mortal was on the battlements of the greater fortress of the castle, and crieth to

knights that warded the bridge, 'Lords,' saith **The**  
 e, 'You are the most chosen knights of my **third**  
 nd and the hardiest, but no hardiment is it to **bridge**  
 t the bridges on account of a single knight  
 hom you durst not abide body to body, whereof  
 eseemeth it great cowardize and not hardiment.  
 nt the lion is hardier than you all, that of his  
 rdiment hath lowered the bridge. Wherefore  
 ow know I well that had I set him to ward the  
 st bridge, he would have warded it better  
 an these that have allowed themselves to be  
 in. 3

## XXIX

Thereupon, behold you Perceval come upon  
 s white mule, sword drawn all naked in his  
 t, and cometh toward them of the third bridge,  
 hereof he smiteth the first so sore that he  
 erthroweth him into the water. Joseus the  
 rmit cometh forward and would fain have  
 ized the other twain, but they cry mercy of  
 rceval, and say that they will be at his will in  
 things, and so will believe on God and His  
 eet Mother and abandon their evil lord.  
 nd they of the fourth bridge say likewise.  
 a such condition he alloweth them to live by  
 e counsel of Joseus, and they cast away their  
 ns and yield up the bridges at his will.  
 rceval thinketh within himself that God's  
 tue hath right great power, but that knight  
 o hath force and power ought well to approve  
 prowess for God's sake. [For of all that  
 shall do or suffer for Him, shall God be  
 ll pleased.] For, were all the world against

Perceval **goeth forward** [our Lord] God, [and He should grant to single one that should be His champion all power and might,] he would conquer them a one hour of the day. But He willeth th man should travail for Him, even as He H self suffered travail for His people. *us.*

## XXX

Perceval cometh again back and alightet the white mule and delivereth the banne Joseus, and then mounteth again on his des and cometh back to them of the fifth bri and these defend themselves right stoutly, that hardy knights are they, and do battle ag Perceval full sturdily. Joseus the hermit co thither and assaulteth them with passing lustihood, that had the Lord God not s him they would have overthrown and slain. Howbeit, he holdeth the banner and grap them when he may lay hold, and grippeth so strait that they may not help themse Perceval slayeth them and crusheth them maketh them topple over into the water ran swiftly beneath the bridge. When the the sixth bridge saw that these were conqu they cried mercy of Perceval and yielded t selves to him and delivered up their swor him, and they of the seventh bridge like. When the red lion saw that the seventh b was won, and that the knights of the bridges had yielded themselves up to Perc he leapt up with such fury that he burst chain as had he been wood mad. He can one of the knights and bit him and slew



hereof the white lion was full wroth, and  
 mneth upon the other lion and teareth him to  
 eces with his claws and teeth.

The  
 lion  
 aideth  
 well

## XXXI

Straightway thereafter he raiseth himself up  
 his two hinder feet and looketh at Perceval,  
 and Perceval at him. Perceval understandeth  
 all the lion's intent, to wit, that they of the  
 last bridge are worse to conquer than the others,  
 and that they may not be conquered at all save  
 by the will of God and by him that is the lion.  
 And the lion warned him that he go not against  
 them with the banner, holy though it were, nor  
 receive them into mercy what surety soever  
 they might make, for that they are traitors, but  
 that he must fain mount upon the white mule,  
 for that she is a beast on God's side, and that  
 Joseus should bring the banner and all the  
 hermits go before, that are worshipful men  
 and of good life, so as to dismay the traitor  
 king, and so shall the end and the conquest of  
 the castle be brought nigh. Of all this the  
 lion made signs to Perceval, for speak he could  
 not. Great affiance hath Perceval in the lion's  
 warning. He alighteth of his destrier and  
 mounteth on the mule, and Joseus holdeth  
 the banner. The company of twelve hermits  
 was there, right seemly and holy. They draw  
 nigh the castle. The knights on the last bridge  
 see Perceval coming towards them and Joseus  
 the hermit holding the banner, by whom they  
 had seen their other fellows wrestled withal and  
 at to the worse.

The  
three  
last  
traitors

## XXXII

The virtue of Our Lord and the dignity of the banner and the goodness of the white men and the holiness of the good hermits that made their orisons to Our Lord so struck the knights that they lost all power over themselves, that treason might not go forth of their hearts, wherefore right heavy were they of their kinsmen that they had seen slain before them. They bethought them that and if by means they might escape thence, they would never return until they had slain Perceval. They come to meet him and so cry him mercy passing sweet in semblance, and say that they will do his will for ever and ever, so only he will let them depart safe and sound. Perceval looketh on the lion to know what he shall do; he sees that the lion thinketh them traitors and not loyal, and that so they were destroyed and that the King that was in the castle would have his force; and that, so Perceval will run upon them, the lion will help him slay them. Perceval telleth the knights that never will he give mercy upon them, and forthwith runneth upon them, sword drawn, and sorely it misliked them that they defended not themselves, in so much that he all but left to slay them for that defence found he in them. But the lion is far from holding them in the like disdain, he runneth upon them and biteth and slayeth them, and then casteth forth their limbs and bodies into the water. Perceval alloweth this is well and seemly, and pleaseth him much.

that he seeth the lion do, nor never before  
 and he seen any beast that he might love and  
 prize so highly as this one.

**The  
 King  
 slayeth  
 himself**

## XXXIII

The King of Castle Mortal was on the  
 battlements of the wall, and seeth how his  
 knights are dead, and how the lion helpeth to  
 slay the last. He setteth himself on the highest  
 place of the walls, then lifteth the skirt of his  
 surcoat and holdeth his sword all naked, that  
 was right keen and well-tempered, and so smiteth  
 himself right through the body, and falleth all  
 down the walls into the water, that was swift  
 and deep, in such sort that Perceval saw him,  
 and all the good hermits likewise, that marvelled  
 each of a King that should slay himself in such  
 manner; but they say according to the judg-  
 ment of the scripture, that by right of evil man  
 should the end be evil. On such wise was the  
 end of this King of whom I tell you.] Josephus  
 stateth us how none ought to marvel that of  
 three brothers, even though they be sons of the  
 same father and mother, one brother should be  
 evil; and the real marvel, saith he, is when  
 the evil corrupteth not the two that are good,  
 for that wickedness is so hard and keen and  
 guiling, and goodness so kindly and simple  
 and humble. Cain and Abel were brothers-  
 in-law, yet Cain slew his brother Abel, the  
 flesh betrayed the other. But great sorrow  
 it, saith Josephus, when the flesh that ought  
 to be one becometh twain, and the one flesh  
 divideth about by wickedness to deceive and

Perceval destroy the other. Josephus recordeth us  
 winneth this evil king that was so traitorous and fal  
 the and yet was of the lineage of the Good Soldi  
 castle Joseph of Abarimacie. This Joseph, as t  
 scripture witnesseth, was his uncle, and t  
 evil king was brother-german of King Fish  
 man, and brother of the good King Pelles t  
 had abandoned his land, in order that he mig  
 serve God, and brother of the Widow La  
 that was Perceval's mother, the most loyal t  
 was ever in Great Britain. All these linea  
 were in the service of Our Lord from t  
 beginning of their lives unto the end, save o  
 this evil King that perished so evilly as y  
 have heard.

## XXXIV

You have heard how the King that  
 seized the castle that had been King Fish  
 man's slew himself in such wise, and how  
 knights were discomfited. Perceval ente  
 into the castle and the worshipful herm  
 together with him. It seemed them when th  
 were come within into the master hall, t  
 they heard chant in an inner chapel *Gloria*  
*excelsis Deo*, and right sweet praising of O  
 Lord. They found the halls right rich a  
 seemly and fairly adorned within. They fo  
 the chapel open where the sacred hallows w  
 wont to be. The holy hermits entered the  
 and made their orisons, and prayed the Savi  
 of the World that He would swiftly restore  
 them the most Holy Graal and the sac  
 hallows that wont to be therewithin wher  
 they might be comforted.

## XXXV

The  
Graal  
cometh  
back

The good men were there within with Perceval, that much loved their company. Josephus witnesseth us that the ancient knights that were of the household of King Fisherman, and the priests and damsels, departed so soon as the King that slew himself had seized the castle, so that they would not be at his court, and the Lord God preserved them from him and made them go into such a place as that they should be in safety. The Saviour of the World well knew that the Good Knight had won the castle (by his valour) that should have been his own of right, and sent back thither all them that had served King Fisherman. Perceval made right great joy of them when he saw them, and they of him. They seemed well to be a folk that had come from some place where God and His commandments were honoured, and so indeed had they.

## XXXVI

The High History witnesseth us that when the conquest of the castle was over, the Saviour of the World was right joyous and well pleased thereof. The Graal presented itself again in the chapel, and the lance whereof the point sheddeth, and the sword wherewith St. John was beheaded that Messire Gawain won, (and the other holy relics whereof was right great plenty. For our Lord God loved the place much.) The hermits went back to their hermitages in the forest and served Our Lord

**King** as they had been wont. Joseus remained  
**Fisher-** Perceval at the castle as long as it pleased  
**man his** but the Good Knight searched out the  
**tomb** there where the New Law had been aband  
 and its maintenance neglected. He rest  
 lives of them that would not maintain it  
 believe. The country was supported by  
 and made safe, and the Law of Our I  
 exalted by his strength and valour. The p  
 and knights that repaired to the castle l  
 Perceval much, for, so far from his goo  
 minishing in ought, they saw from day to  
 how his valour and his faith in God incre  
 and multiplied. And he showed them  
 sepulchre of his uncle King Fisherman in  
 chapel before the altar. The coffin was  
 [and the tabernacle costly] and loaded of pre  
 stones. And the priests and knights  
 witness that as soon as the body was plac  
 the coffin and they were departed thence,  
 found on their return that it [was covered b  
 tabernacle] all dight as richly as it is now  
 seen, nor might they know who had set it  
 save only the commandment of Our I  
 And they say that every night was th  
 great brightness of light as of candles there  
 they knew not whence it should come sa  
 God. [Perceval had won the castle b  
 command of God. The Graal was restoi  
 the holy chapel, and the other hallows a  
 have heard. The evil believe was done  
 from the kingdom, and all were assured  
 in the New Law by the valour of the  
 Knight.]

## BRANCH XIX

### TITLE I

**N**OW is the story silent of Perceval and **Two**  
cometh back to King Arthur, the very **sun**  
atter thereof, like as testifieth the history, that **appear**  
no place is corrupted and the Latin lie not.  
King Arthur was at Cardoile on one day of  
Whitsuntide that was right fair and clear, and  
many knights were in the hall. The King sate  
meat and all the knights about him. The  
King looketh at the windows of the hall to right  
and left, and seeth that two sunbeams are  
shining within that fill the whole hall with light.  
Whereof he marvelleth much and sendeth with-  
out the hall to see what it might be. The  
messenger cometh back again and saith thereof  
that two suns appear to be shining, the one in  
the East and the other in the West. He  
marvelleth much thereat, and prayeth Our Lord  
that he may be permitted to know wherefore  
two suns should appear in such wise. A Voice  
appeared at one of the windows that said to  
him: 'King, marvel not hereof that two suns  
should appear in the sky, for our Lord God  
hath well the power, and know well that this is  
for joy of the conquest that the Good Knight  
Sir Lancelot made that took away the shield from  
Sir Mordred. He hath won the land that be-

**A** damsel with a casket longed to good King Fisherman from the King of Castle Mortal, that did away the good believe, and therefore was it that Graal was hidden. Now God so willeth you go thither, and that you choose out the knights of your court, for better pilgrimage you never make, and what time you shall return hither, your faith shall be doubled (and people of Great Britain shall be better disposed and better taught to maintain the service of Saviour.)

## II

Thereupon the Voice departed, and pleased was the King of that it had said. sitteth at meat beside the Queen. Straight behold you, a damsel that cometh of such beauty as never was greater, and clad right richly, she beareth a coffer richer than ever you saw for it was all of fine gold and set with precious stones that sparkled like fire. The coffer not large. The damsel holdeth it between her hands. When she was alighted she came before the King and saluteth him the faith she may and the Queen likewise. The King returneth her salute. 'Sir,' saith she, 'I come to your court for that it is the sovereign of all other, and so bring I you here this vessel that you see as a gift; and it hath within the head of a knight, but none may open the coffer save he alone that slew the knight. Wherefore I pray and beseech you, as you are the best king that liveth, that you first set your hand thereon, and in like manner afterwards



make proof of your knights, and so the crime and the blood-feud thereof be brought home to you or to any knight that may be within yonder. I pray you that the knight who shall be able to open the coffer wherein the head of the knight lieth, and who therefore is he that slew him, shall have grace of forty days after that you shall be returned from the Graal.' 'Damsel,' saith the King, 'How shall it be known who the knight was?' 'Sir,' saith she, 'Right eath, for the letters are sealed within that tell his name and the name of him that slew him.' The King granteth the damsel her will in such wise as she had asked of him. He hath received the coffer, then maketh her be set at meat and right richly honoured.

Trial  
of the  
casket

## III

When the King had eaten, the damsel cometh before him. 'Sir,' saith she, 'Make your knights be summoned and ready for that which you have granted me, and you yourself first of all.' 'Damsel,' saith the King, 'Right willingly.' He setteth his hand to the coffer, thinking to open it, but it was not right that it should open for him. As he set his hand thereon the coffer sweated through just as had it been sprinkled all over and was wet with water. The King marvelled greatly, and so made Messire Gawain set his hand to it and Lancelot and all those of the court, but he that might open it was not among them. Messire Kay the Seneschal had served at meat. He heard say that the King and all the others had essayed and proved the

**Kay** coffer but might not open it. He is come  
**boasteth himself** thither, all uncalled for. 'Now, then, Kay,'  
saith the King, 'I had forgotten you.' 'By  
my head,' saith Kay, 'You ought not to forget  
me, for as good knight am I and of as much  
worth as they that you have called before me,  
and you ought not to have delayed to send for me.  
You have summoned all the others, and me not  
a whit, and yet am I as well able, or ought to  
be, to open the coffer as are they; for against  
as many knights have I defended me as they,  
and as many have I slain in defending my body  
as have they.' 'Kay,' saith the King, 'shall  
you be so merry and you may open the coffer,  
and if you have slain the knight whose head  
lieth therein? By my head, I that am King  
would fain that the coffer should not open for  
me, for never was no knight so poor as that he  
should have neither kinsman nor friend, for he  
is not loved of all the world that is hated by one  
man.' 'By my head,' saith Kay, 'I would  
that all the heads of all the knights I have slain  
save one only, were in the midst of this hall, and  
that there were letters sealed with them to say  
that they were slain by me. Then would you  
believe what you are not willing to believe for  
the envious ones that think they are better worth  
than I, and yet have not served you so well.'

## IV

'Kay,' saith the King, 'Come forward,  
there is no need of this.' Messire Kay the  
Sceneschal cometh to the dais before the King,  
whereon was the coffer, and taketh it right

boldly and setteth one of his hands below it and the other above. The coffer opened as soon as he clapped hand thereon, and the head within could be seen all openly. A passing delicate-savoured smell and right sweet issued therefrom, so that not a knight in the hall but smelt it. 'Sir,' saith Kay to the King, 'Now may you know that some prowess and some hardiment have I done in your service, for might none of your knights that you prize so highly open the coffer this day, nor would you have known this day who is therein for them! But now you know it by me, and therefore of so much ought you to be well pleased with me!'

## V

'Sir,' saith the damsel that had brought the coffer, 'Let the letters be read that are within, so shall you know who the knight was and of what lineage, and what was the occasion of his death.' The King sitteth beside the Queen, and biddeth call one of his own chaplains. When maketh he all the knights in the hall be seated and keep silence, and commandeth the chaplain that he should spell out the letters of gold all openly according as he should find them written. The chaplain looketh at them, and when he had scanned them down, began to sigh. 'Sir,' saith he to the King and Queen, 'hearken me, and all the other, your knights.'

## VI

'These letters say that the knight whose head is in this vessel was named Lohot, and he

The was son of King Arthur and Queen Guenievr  
 head of He had slain on a day that is past, Logrin th  
 Lohot Giant, by his hardiment. Messire Kay th  
 Seneschal was passing by there, and so found  
 Lohot sleeping upon Logrin, for such was h  
 custom that he went to sleep upon the man aft  
 that he had slain him. Messire Kay smote o  
 Lohot's head, and so left the head and the bod  
 on the piece of ground. He took the head o  
 the Giant and so bore it to the court of Kir  
 Arthur. He gave the King and Queen and  
 the barons of the court to understand that h  
 had slain him, but this did he not; rather, th  
 he did was to slay Lohot, according to th  
 writing and the witness of these letters. / Wh  
 the Queen heareth these letters and this wittn  
 of her son that came thus by his death, sh  
 falleth in a swoon on the coffer. After th  
 she taketh the head between her two hands, a  
 knew well that it was he by a scar that he h  
 on his face when he was a child. The Ki  
 himself maketh dole thereof so sore that no  
 may comfort him, for before these tidings h  
 had thought that his son was still on live a  
 that he was the Best Knight in the world, a  
 when the news came to his court that the Knig  
 of the Golden Circlet had slain the Knight  
 the Dragon, he supposed that it had been Loh  
 his son, for that none had named Perceval /  
 Gawain nor Lancelot, And all they of t  
 court are right sorrowful for the death  
 Lohot, and Messire Kay hath departed, a  
 if the damsel had not respited the day until t  
 fortieth after the King's return, vengeance wor

have been taken of Kay or ever he might have turned him thence. For never did no man see greater dole made in the King's court than they of the Table Round made for the youth. King Arthur and the Queen were so stricken of sorrow that none durst call upon them to make cheer. The damsel that brought thither the coffer was well avenged of the shame that Messire Kay the Seneschal had done her on a day that was past, for this thing would not have been known so soon save it had been by her.

Arthur  
goeth on  
pilgrim-  
age

## VII

When the mourning for the King's son was abated, <sup>Gawain</sup> Lancelot and many others said to him, 'Sir, you know well that God willeth you should go to the castle that was King Fisher-man's on pilgrimage to the most Holy Graal, for it is not right to delay a thing that one hath in covenant with God.' 'Lords,' saith the King, 'right willingly will I go, and thereto am I right well disposed.' The King apparelleth himself for the pilgrimage, and saith that Messire Gawain and Lancelot shall go with him, without more knights, and taketh a squire to wait upon his body, and the Queen herself would he have taken thither but for the mourning he made for her son, whereof none might give her any comfort. But or ever the King departed he made the head be brought into the Isle of Avalon, to a chapel of Our Lady that was there, where was a worshipful holy hermit that was well loved of Our Lord.

**Kay** The King departed from Cardoil and too  
**seeth to** leave of the Queen and all the knight  
**Briant** Lancelot and Messire Gawain go along with  
 him and a squire that carrieth their arm  
 Kay the Seneschal was departed from the  
 court for dread of the King and his knight  
 He durst not abide in the Greater Britain, and  
 so betook him into the Lesser. Briant of the  
 Isles was of great power in these times, a knight  
 of great strength and hardiment, for all Greater  
 Britain had had many disputes between him  
 and King Arthur. His land was full strong  
 castles and forests and right fruitful, and many  
 good knights had he in his land. When he  
 knew that Kay the Seneschal had departed  
 such sort from the court, and that he had  
 crossed the sea, he sent for him and held him  
 of his household, and said that he would hold  
 him harmless against the King and against  
 his men. When he knew that the King had  
 departed he began to war upon the land and  
 to slay his men and to challenge his castles.

## BRANCH XX

### TITLE I

**T**HE story saith that King Arthur goeth **The**  
his way and Lancelot and Messire Gawain **pilgrims**  
with him, and they had ridden so far one day **benighted**  
that night came on in a forest and they might  
find no hold. Messire Gawain marvelled him  
much that they had ridden the day long without  
finding neither hold nor hermitage. Night was  
come and the sky was dark and the forest full  
of gloom. They knew not whitherward to turn  
to pass the night. 'Lords,' saith the King,  
'Where may we be able to alight to-night?'  
'Sir, we know not, for this forest is right  
wearisome.' They make the squire climb up  
a tall tree and tell him to look as far as he may  
to try whether he may espy any hold or house  
where they may lodge. The squire looketh  
on all sides, and then telleth them he seeth a  
fire a long way off as if it were in a waste  
house, but that he seeth nought there save the  
fire and the house. 'Take good heed,' saith  
Lancelot, 'in which quarter it is, so that you  
may know well how to lead us thither.' He  
saith that right eath may he lead them.

### II

With that he cometh down and mounteth  
again on his hackney, and they go forward  
a great pace and ride until they espy the fire

**A** and the hold. They pass on over a bridge of  
 treacher- wattle, and find the courtyard all deserted and  
 ous the house from within great and high and  
 chamber hideous. But there was a great fire within  
 whereof the heat might be felt from afar. They  
 alight of their horses, and the squire draweth  
 them on one side amidst the hall, and the  
 knights set them beside the fire all armed.  
 The squire seeth a chamber in the house and  
 entereth thereinto to see if he may find any  
 meat for the horses, but he cometh forth again  
 the swiftest he may and crieth right sweetly of  
 the Mother of the Saviour. They ask him  
 what aileth him, and he saith that he hath found  
 the most treacherous chamber ever he found  
 yet, for he felt there, what with heads and  
 what with hands, more than two hundred men  
 dead, and saith that never yet felt he so soon  
 afear'd. Lancelot went into the chamber to  
 see whether he spake true, and felt the men  
 that lay dead, and groped among them from  
 head to head and felt that there was a great  
 heap of them there, and came back and sat  
 at the fire all laughing. The King asked  
 whether the squire had told truth. Lancelot  
 answereth him yea, and that never yet had he  
 found so many dead men together. 'Me  
 thinketh,' saith Messire Gawain, 'Sith that  
 they are dead we have nought to fear of them  
 but God protect us from the living.'

## III

While they were talking thus, behold you  
 damsel that cometh into the dwelling on foot



The  
Damsel  
of the  
Beards

and all alone, and she cometh lamenting right grievously. 'Ha, God!' saith she, 'How long a penance is this for me, and when will it come to an end?' She seeth the knights sitting in the midst of the house. 'Fair Lord God,' saith she, 'Is he there within through whom I am to escape from this great dolour?' The knights hearken to her with great wonderment. They look and see her enter within the door, and her kirtle was all torn with thorns and briars in the forest. Her feet were all bleeding for that she was unshod. She had a face of exceeding great beauty. She carried the half of a dead man, and cast it into the chamber with the others. She knew Lancelot again so soon as she saw him. 'Ha, God!' saith she, 'I am quit of my penance! Sir,' saith she, 'Welcome may you be, you and your company!' Lancelot looketh at her in wonderment. 'Damsel,' saith he, 'Are you a thing in God's behalf?' 'Certes, Sir,' saith she, 'Yea! nor be you adread of nought! I am the Damsel of the Castle of Beards, that was wont to deal with knights so passing foully as you have seen. You did away the toll that was levied on the knights that passed by, and you lay in the castle that demanded it of them that passed through the demesne thereof. But you had me in covenant that so the Holy Graal should appear to you, you would come back to me, for otherwise never should I have been willing to let you go. You returned not, for that you saw not the Graal. For the shame that I did to knights was this penance laid upon

A foul me in this forest and this manor, to last unpenance such time as you should come. For the cruel I did them was sore grievous, for never w knight brought to me but I made his nose cut off or his eyes thrust out, and some were there as you saw that had their feet or their hands stricken off. Now have I paid full debt thereof since, for needs must I carry into the chamber all the knights that are slain in the forest, and within this manor must I cast them according to the custom thereof, alone, without company; and this knight that I carried in here now hath lain so long in the forest that wild beasts have eaten the half of his body. Now am I quit of this foul penance, thanks to God and to you, save only that I must go back when it shall be daylight in like manner as I came here.'

## IV

'Damsel,' saith Lancelot, 'Right glad am I that we should have come to lodge the night here within, for love of you, for never saw I a damsel that might do so cruel penance.' 'Sir,' saith she, 'You know not yet what it is, but you will know it ere long this night, both you and your fellows, and the Lord God shield you from death and from mischief! Every night cometh a rout of knights that are black and foul and hideous, albeit none knoweth when they come, and they do battle right sore the one against other, and the stout endureth of right long while; but one knight that came within yonder by chance, the first night I came

either, in like manner as you have come, made  
 a circle round me with his sword, and I sate  
 within it, as soon as I saw them coming, and so  
 had I no dread of them, for I had in remembrance  
 the Saviour of the World and His passing sweet  
 Mother. And you will do the same, and you  
 believe me herein, for these are knights fiends.’  
 Lancelot draweth his sword and maketh a  
 great circle round the house-place, and they  
 were within.

## V

Thereupon, behold you the knights that come  
 through the forest with such a rushing as it  
 seemed they would rend it all up by the roots.  
 Afterward, they enter into the manor and  
 catch great blazing firebrands and fling them  
 one at another. They enter into the house  
 rattling together, and are keen to fall upon the  
 knights, but they may not. They hurl the fire-  
 brands at them from afar, but they are holding  
 their shields and their swords naked. Lance-  
 lot maketh semblant as though he would leap  
 towards them, and sore great cowardize it  
 seemeth him not to go against them. ‘Sir,’  
 with the damsel, ‘Take heed that you go not  
 forth of the circle, for you will be in sore  
 jeopardy of death, for well you see what evil  
 folk be these.’ Lancelot was not minded to  
 hold himself back, but that he would go toward  
 them sword drawn, and they run upon him on  
 all sides, but he defendeth him stoutly and  
 smiteth the burning firebrands so that he maketh  
 red-hot charcoal fly, and thrusteth his sword

The  
 knights’  
 ghosts

**A** amidst their faces. King Arthur and Messire Gawain leap up to help Lancelot and smite upon these evil folk and cut them limb from limb, and they bellow like fiends so that the whole forest resoundeth thereof. And when they fell to the ground, they may no longer endure, but become fiends and ashes, and their bodies and their horses become devils all black in the shape of ravens that come forth of their bodies. They marvel right sore what this may be, and say that such hostel is right grievous.

## VI

When they had put them all to the worse, they sate them down again and rested; but scarce were they seated or ever another rout of yet blacker folk came about them, and they bare spears burning and flaming, and many of them carried dead knights that they had slain in the forest, and dropped them in the midst of the house, and then bid the damsel carry and set them with the others. Howbeit, she answered that she is quit of their commandment and service, nor no longer is forced to do nought for them sith that she hath done her penance. They hrust forward their spears toward the King and the two knights, as though they were come to avenge their companions; but they all three leapt up together and attacked them right stoutly. But this rout was greater and of knights more hideous. They began to press the King and his knights hard, and they might not put them to the worse as they did the others. And while they were thus in the

thickest of the conflict, they heard the stroke of a bell sounding, and forthwith the knight and fiends departed and hurried away a great pace. 'Lords,' saith the damsel, 'Had this sound not been heard, scarce might you have endured, for yet another huge rout of this folk was coming in such sort as that none might have withstood them, and this sound have I heard every night, whereby my life hath been saved.'

## VII

Josephus telleth us that as at this time was there no bell neither in Greater Britain nor in Lesser; but folk were called together by a horn, and in many places there were sheets of steel, and in other places clappers of wood. King Arthur marvelled him much of this sound, so clear and sweet was it, and it well seemed him that it came on God's behalf, and right fain was he to see a bell and so he might. They were the night until the morrow in the house, as I tell you. The damsel took leave of them and so departed. As they came forth of the hold, they met three hermits that told them they were going to search for the bodies that were in this manor so that they might bury them in a waste chapel that was hard by, for such knights had lain there as that henceforward the haunting of the evil folk would be stayed in such sort as that they would have no more power to do hurt to any, wherefore they would set therewithin a worshipful hermit that should build up the place in holiness for the service of God. The King

The knight married was right joyful thereof, and told them that it had been too perilous. They parted from the hermits and entered into a forest, nor was there never a day so long as King Arthur was on pilgrimage, so saith the history, but he heard the sound of one single bell every hour, whereof he was right glad. He bade Messire Gawain and Lancelot that they should everywhere conceal his name, and that they should call him not Lord but Comrade. They yielded him his will, and prayed to Our Lord that He would guide and lead them to such a castle and such a hostel as that they might be lodged honourably therein. They rode on until evening drew nigh, and they found a right fair hold in the forest, whereinto they entered and alighted. The damsel of the hold came to meet them and made them right great cheer, then made them be disarmed, afterward bringeth them right rich robes to wear. She looketh at Lancelot and knoweth him again.

## VIII

‘Sir,’ saith she, ‘You had once, on a day that is past, right great pity of me, and saved me my honour, whereof am I in great unhappiness. But better love I to suffer miserie in honour, than to have plenty and abundance in shame or reproach, for shame endureth, but sorrow is soon overpassed.’ Thereupon behold you the knight of the hold, whither he cometh from shooting in the forest and maketh carry full great plenty venison of deer and wild boar. He alighted to greet the knights, and began

laugh when he saw Lancelot. 'By my head,' **against**  
saith he, 'I know you well. For you dis- **his will**  
appointed me of the thing I best loved in the  
world, and made me marry this damsel that  
never yet had joy of me, nor never shall have.'  
Fair Sir,' saith Lancelot, 'You will do your  
pleasure therein, for she is yours. Truth it is  
that I made you marry her, for you were fain  
to do her a disgrace and a shame in such sort  
that her kinsfolk would have had shame of her.'  
By my head,' saith the knight, 'the damsel  
that I loved before loveth you no better hereof,  
nay, rather, fain would she procure your vexa-  
tion and your hurt and your shame if she may,  
and great power hath she in this forest.' 'Sir,'  
saith Lancelot, 'I have sithence spoken to her  
and she to me, and so hath she told me her will  
and her wish.' Thereupon the knight bade the  
knights take water, and the lady taketh the basins  
and presenteth water to the knights. 'Avoid,  
damsel,' saith the King, 'Take it away! Never,  
please God, shall it befall that we should accept  
such service from you.' 'By my head,' saith  
the knight, 'But so must you needs do, for  
either than she shall not serve you to-night in  
this matter, or otherwise shall you not eat with  
me this night there within.'

## IX

Lancelot understandeth that the knight is not  
overburdened of courtesy, and he seeth the  
table garnished of good meat, and bethinketh  
him he will not do well to lose such ease, for  
dis- ease enough had they the night before.

The knight is a churl He maketh the King take water of the lady, and the same service did she for all of them. The knight biddeth them be seated. The King would have made the lady sit beside him at the table, but the Knight said that there she should not sit. She goeth to sit among the squires as she was wont to do. The knights are sorry enough thereof, but they durst not gainsay the will of her lord. When they had eaten, the knight said to Lancelot, 'Now may you see what she hath gained of me by your making me take her perforce; nor never, so help me God, so long as I live shall she be honoured otherwise by me, for so have I promised her that I love far more.' 'Sir,' saith Lancelot, 'To my thinking, you do il herein and a sin, and meseemeth you should have great blame thereof of them that know it and may your churlishness be your own, for nought thereof take I to myself.'

## X

Lancelot telleth the King and Messire Gawain that were he not lodged in his hostel, and had him outside of the hold, he would willingly have set the blood of his body on it but he would have handled him in such sort as that the lady should be maintained in greater honour, either by force or by prayer, in like manner as he did when he made him marry her. They were right well lodged the night and lay in the hold until the morrow, when they departed thence, and rode right busily on their journeys until they came into a very different land, scarce inhabited



Tintagel  
the great  
castle

any folk, and found a little castle in a combe. They came thitherward and saw that the enclosure of the castle was fallen down into an abysm, so that none might approach it on that side, but it had a right fair gateway and a door tall and wide whereby one entered. They beheld a chapel that was right fair and rich, and below was a great ancient hall. They saw a priest appear in the midst of the castle, bald and old, that had come forth of the chapel. They are come thither and alighted, and asked the priest what the castle was, and he told them that it was the great Tintagel. 'And how is this ground all caved in about the castle?' 'Sir,' saith the priest, 'I will tell you. Sir,' saith he, 'King Uther Pendragon, that was father of King Arthur, held a great court and summoned all his barons. The King of this castle that then was here was named Gorlois. He went to the court and took his wife with him, that was named Ygerne, and she was the fairest dame in any kingdom. King Uther sought acquaintance of her for her great beauty, and regarded her and honoured her more than all the others of his court. King Gorlois departed hence and made the Queen come back to this castle for the dread that he had of King Uther Pendragon. King Uther was very wroth with him, and commanded him to send back the Queen his wife. King Gorlois said that he would not. Thereupon King Uther Pendragon defied him, and then laid siege about this castle where the Queen was. King Gorlois was gone to seek for succour. King Uther Pendragon

**Merlin** had **Merlin** with him of whom you have heard **his grave** tell, that was so crafty. He made him be changed into the semblance of King Gorlois, so that he entered there within by Merlin's art and lay that night with the Queen, and so begot King Arthur in a great hall that was next to the enclosure there where this abysm is. And for this sin hath the ground sunken in on this wise.' He cometh with them toward the chapel that was right fair, and had a right rich sepulchre therein. 'Lords, in this sepulchre was placed the body of Merlin, but nevermought it be set inside the chapel, wherefore perforce it remained outside. And know of very truth that the body lieth not within the sepulchre, for, so soon as it was set therein, it was taken out and snatched away, either on God's behalf or the Enemy's, but which we know not.'

## XI

'Sir,' saith King Arthur, 'And what became of King Gorlois!' 'Sir,' saith he, 'The King slew him on the morrow of the night he lay with his wife, and so forthwith espoused Queen Ygerne, and in such manner as I tell you was King Arthur conceived in sin that is not the best King in the world.' King Arthur hath heard this as concerning his birth that he knew not, and is a little shamed thereof and confounded on account of Messire Gawain and Lancelot. He himself marvelleth much thereof and much it misliketh him that the priest hath said so much. They lay the night in the hold

and so departed thence on the morrow when they had heard mass. Lancelot and Messire Gawain, that thought they knew the forest, found the land so changed and different that they knew not whither they were become, (and such an one should come into the land that had been King Fisher's, and he should come again another time within forty days, should not find the castle within a year.)

## XII

Josephus telleth us that the semblances of the lands changed themselves by reason of the divers adventures that by the pleasure of God befell therein, and that the quest of adventures would not have pleased the knights so well and they had not found them so different. For, when they had entered into a forest or an island where they had found any adventure, and they came there another time, they found holds and castles and adventures of another kind, so that their toils and travails might not weary them, and also for that God would that the land should be conformed to the New Law. And they were the knights that had more toil and travail seeking adventures than all the knights of the world before them, and in holding to that whereof they had made covenant; nor of no court of no king in the world went forth so many good nights as went forth from the court of King Arthur, and but that God loved them so much, never might they have endured such toil and travail as they did from day to day; for without fail, good knights were they, and good

Of things  
changed

Lancelot knights not only to deal hard buffets, but rather in that they were loyal and true, and had fast his in the Saviour of the World and His sweet covenant Mother, and therefore dreaded shame and love honour. King Arthur goeth on his way and Messire Gawain and Lancelot with him, and they pass through many strange countries, and so enter into a great forest. Lancelot called to remembrance the knight that he had slain in the Waste City whither behoved him to go, and knew well that the day whereon he should come was drawing nigh. He told King Arthur as much and then said, that and he should go not, he would belie his covenant. They rode until they came to a cross where the ways forked. 'Sir,' saith Lancelot, 'Behoveth me to acquit me of my pledge, and I go in great adventure and peril of death, nor know I whether I may live at all thereafter, for I slew the knight, albeit I was right sorry thereof, but or ever I slew him, I had to swear that I would go set my head in the like jeopardy as he had set his. Now the day draweth nigh that I must go thither, for I am unwilling to fail of my covenant, whereof I should be blamed, and, if God grant me to escape therefrom, I will follow you speedily.' The King embraceth him and kisseth him at parting and Messire Gawain also, and they pray God preserve his body and his life, and that they may see him again ere it be long. Lancelot would willingly have sent salute to the Queen had he durst, for she lay nearer his heart than aught beside, but he would not that the King nor Messire Gawain

should misdeem of the love they might carry to The  
heir kinswoman. The love is so rooted in his Waste  
heart that he may not leave it, into what peril City  
soever he may go; rather, he prayeth God  
every day as sweetly as he may, that He save  
the Queen, and that he may deliver his body  
from this jeopardy. He hath ridden until that he  
cometh at the hour of noon into the Waste City,  
and findeth the city empty as it was the first  
time he was there.

## XIII

In the city wherein Lancelot had arrived  
were many waste houses and rich palaces fallen  
down. He had scarce entered within the city  
when he heard a great cry and lamentation of  
lames and damsels, but he knew not on which  
side it was, and they say: 'Ha, God, how hath  
the knight betrayed us that slew the knight,  
asmuch as he returneth not! This day is the  
day come that he ought to redeem his pledge!  
Never again ought any to put trust in knight,  
nor that he cometh not! The others that came  
either before him have failed us, and so will he  
also for dread of death; for he smote off the  
head of the comeliest knight that was in this  
kingdom and the best, wherefore ought he also  
to have his own smitten off, but good heed  
maketh he to save it if he may!' Thus spake  
the damsels. Lancelot much marvelled where  
they might be, for nought could he espy of  
them, albeit he cometh before the palace, there  
where he slew the knight. He alighteth, then  
maketh fast his horse's reins to a ring that was

Lancelot fixed in the mounting-stage of marble. Scar  
prayeth hath he done so, when a knight alighteth, t  
and comely and strong and deliver, and he w  
clad in a short close-fitted jerkin of silk, a  
held the axe in his hand wherewith Lancel  
had smitten off the head of the other knight  
and he came sharpening it on a whet-stone  
cut the better. Lancelot asketh him, 'Wh  
will you do with this axe?' 'By my head  
saith the knight, 'That shall you know in su  
sort as my brother knew when you cut off t  
head, so I may speed of my business.' 'How  
saith Lancelot, 'Will you slay me then  
'That shall you know,' saith he, 'or ever y  
depart hence. Have you not loyally promis  
hereof that you would set your head in the sar  
jeopardy as the knight set his, whom you sle  
without defence? And no otherwise may y  
depart therefrom. Wherefore now come fo  
ward without delay and kneel down and stret  
your neck even as my brother did, and so w  
I smite off your head, and, if you do not th  
of your own good will, you shall soon find o  
that shall make you do it perforce, were y  
twenty knights as good as you are one. B  
well I know that you have not come hither f  
this, but only to fulfil your pledge, and th  
you will raise no contention herein.' Lancel  
thinketh to die, and is minded to abide by th  
he hath in covenant without fail, wherefore  
lieth down on the ground as it were on a cro  
and crieth mercy of God. He mindeth h  
of the Queen, and crieth God of mercy a  
saith, 'Ha, Lady,' saith he, 'Never shall I

ou more ! but, might I have seen you yet once **Lancelot**  
 gain before I die, exceeding great comfort had **loveth**  
 been to me, and my soul would have departed **well**  
 om me more at ease. But this, that never  
 all I see you more, as now it seemeth me,  
 oubleth me more than the death whereby  
 hoveth me to die, for die one must when one  
 ith lived enough long. But faithfully do I  
 omise you that my love shall fail you not yet,  
 d never shall it be but that my soul shall love  
 ou in the other world like as my body hath  
 ved you in this, if thus the soul may love !'  
 With that the tears fell from his eyes, nor,  
 ever sithence that he was knight, saith the  
 dry, had he wept for nought that had befallen  
 m nor for heaviness of heart, but this time  
 d one other. He taketh three blades of  
 ass and so eateth thereof in token of the holy  
 mmunion, then signeth him of the cross and  
 esseth him, riseth up, setteth himself on his  
 lees and stretcheth forth his neck. The  
 ight lifteth up the axe. Lancelot heareth  
 e blow coming, boweth his head and the axe  
 isseth him. He saith to him, 'Sir Knight,  
 did not my brother that you slew ; rather,  
 held his head and neck quite still, and so  
 hoveth you to do !' Two damsels appeared  
 the palace-windows of passing great beauty,  
 d they knew Lancelot well. So, as the  
 ight was aiming a second blow, one of the  
 msels crieth to him, 'And you would have  
 y love for evermore, throw down the axe and  
 y the knight quit ! Otherwise have you lost  
 e for ever !' The knight forthwith flingeth

translations from Welsh text in  
this branch.

## BRANCH XXI

### TITLE I

Assembly  
of tourney

**T**HEREWITHAL the history is silent of Lancelot, and speaketh word of the King and Messire Gawain, that are in sore misgiving as concerning him, for right gladly would they have heard tidings of him. They met a knight that was coming all armed, and Messire Gawain asketh him whence he came, and he said that he came from the land of the Queen of the Golden Circlet, to whom a sore loss hath befallen ; for the Son of the Widow Lady had won the Circlet of Gold for that he had slain the Knight of the Dragon, and she was to keep it safe for him and deliver it up to him at his will. 'But now hath Nabigant of the Rock reft her thereof, and a right outrageous knight is he and puissant ; wherefore hath he commanded a damsel that she bring it to an assembly of knights that is to be held in the Meadow of the Tent of the two damsels, there where Messire Gawain did away the evil custom. The damsel that will bring the Golden Circlet will give it to the knight that shall do best at the assembly. Nabigant is keenly set upon having it, and maketh the more sure for that once aforetime he hath had it by force of arms. And I am going to the knights that



Now not these tidings, in order that when they  
 all hear them, they shall go to the assembly.' **The Damsels' Tent**  
 wherewithal the knight departeth. The King  
 and Messire Gawain have ridden so far that they  
 came to the tent where Messire Gawain destroyed  
 the evil custom by slaying the two knights. He  
 found the tent garnished within and without in like  
 manner as it was when he was there, and Messire  
 Gawain made the King be seated on a quilted  
 mattress of straw, right costly, and thereafter be  
 armed of a squire, and he himself disarmed him,  
 and they washed their hands and faces for the  
 tent wherewith both of them were besmattered.  
 And Messire Gawain found the chests un-  
 locked that were at the head of the couch,  
 and made the King be apparelled of white rich  
 ruffs that he found, and a robe of cloth of silk  
 and gold, and he clad himself in the like manner,  
 for there was the chest not a whit disfurnished  
 thereby, for the tent was all garnished of rich  
 ornaments. When they were thus dight, a  
 man might have sought far or ever he should  
 find so comely knights.

## II

Thereupon, behold you the two Damsels of  
 the Tent coming. 'Damsels,' saith Messire  
 Gawain, 'Welcome may you be.' 'Sir,' say  
 they, 'Good adventure may you have both  
 of you. It seemeth us that you take right boldly  
 the tent which is ours, yet never for neither of us  
 would you do a thing whereof you were be-  
 sought.' 'Messire Gawain,' saith the elder,  
 'no knight is there in this kingdom but would

Arthur be right joyous and he supposed that I lo  
 and him, and I prayed you of your love on a  
 Gawain that is past, for the valour of your knighthe  
 yet never did you grant it me. How durst  
 have affiance in me of aught, and take the thi  
 that are mine own so boldly, when I may  
 have affiance in you?' 'Damsel, for y  
 courtesy and the good custom of the land;  
 you told me when the evil customs were ov  
 thrown, that all the honours and all the courte  
 that are due to knights should ever be re  
 within for all them that should come hither  
 harbour.' 'Messire Gawain, you say true,  
 of right might one let the courtesy tarry  
 pay back churlishness by churlishness.

## III

'The assembly of knights will begin  
 morrow in this launde that is so fair. Th  
 will be knights in plenty, and the prize  
 be the Circlet of Gold. Now shall we  
 who will do best. The assembly will last th  
 whole days, and of one thing at least you  
 well make boast between you and your comr  
 that you have the fairest hostel and the n  
 pleasant and the most quiet of any knight  
 the assembly.' The younger damsel looket  
 King Arthur. 'And you,' saith she, 'W  
 will you do? Will you be as strange tow  
 us as Messire Gawain is friendly with other

## IV

'Damsel,' saith the King, 'Messire Gav  
 will do his pleasure and I mine. Strange s

not be in respect of you, nor toward other damsels; rather shall they be honoured on my part so long as I live, and I myself will be to your commandment.' 'Sir,' saith she, 'Gramercy greatly. I pray you, therefore, that you be my knight at the tournament.' 'Damsel, this ought I not to refuse you, and right glad at heart shall I be and I may do aught that shall please you; for all knights ought to be at pains for the sake of dame or damsel.' 'Sir,' saith he, 'What is your name?'

## V

'Damsel,' saith he, 'My name is Arthur, and I am of Tincardoil.' 'Have you nought to do with King Arthur?' 'Damsel, already have I been many times at his court, and, if he loved me not nor I him, I should not be in Messire Gawain's company. In truth, he is the King in the world that I love best.' The damsel looketh at King Arthur, but wotteth not whit that it is he, and full well is she pleased with the seeming and countenance of him. As for the King, lightly might he have trusted that he should have her as his lady-love so long as he remained with her; but there is much to say between his semblant and his thought, for he knoweth good semblant toward the damsel, that hath over much affiance therein, but his thought is on Queen Guenievre in what place soever he may be. For nought loveth he so well as her.

## VI

The damsels made stable the horses and survey for the bodies of the knights right richly

**The** at night, and they lay in two right rich beds in  
**damsels** the midst of the hall, and their arms were all set ready before. The damsels would not depart until such time as they were asleep. The harness of the knights that came to the assembly came on the morrow from all parts. They set up their booths and stretched their tents all round about the launde of the forest. King Arthur and Messire Gawain were risen in the morning and saw the knights come from all parts. The elder damsel cometh to Messire Gawain and saith to him, 'Sir,' saith she, 'I will that you bear to-day red arms that I will lend you, for the love of me, and take heed that they be well employed, and I desire that you should not be known by your arms; rather let it be said that you are the Red Knight, and you shall allow it accordingly.' 'Damsel, Gramercy greatly!' saith Messire Gawain, 'I will do my endeavour in arms the best I may for love of you.' The younger damsel cometh to King Arthur; 'Sir,' saith she, 'My sister hath made her gift and I will make mine. I have a suit of arms of gold, the richest that knight may wear, that I will lend you, for methinketh they will be better employed on you than on ever another knight; so I pray you that you remember me at the assembly in like manner as I shall oftentimes remember you.'

## VII

'Damsel,' saith the King, 'Gramercy! No knight is there that should see you but ought to have you in remembrance in his heart for you

courtesy and your worth.' The knights were and their come about the tents. The King and Messire knights Gawain were armed and had made caparison their horses right richly. The damsel that should give the Golden Circlet was come. Nabigant of the Rock had brought great fellowships of knights together with him, and ordinance was made for the assembly.

## VIII

The younger damsel saith to King Arthur : 'Well may you know that no knight that is here this day hath better arms than are yours, wherefore take heed that you show you to be good knight for love of me.' 'Damsel,' saith King Arthur, 'God grant that I be so.' So they laid hold on their reins and mounted their horses, that made great leaping and went away a great gallop. Saith the younger damsel to her sister : 'What think you of my knight, doth he not please you?' 'Yea,' saith the elder, 'But sore misliketh me of Messire Gawain for that he is not minded to do as I would have him. But he shall yet aby it dear.' King Arthur and Messire Gawain strike into the midst of the assembly like as it were two lions unchained, and at their first coming they smite down two knights to the ground under the feet of their horses. Messire Gawain taketh the two horses and sendeth them by a squire to the Damsels of the Tent, that made much joy thereof. After that were they not minded to take more booty as of horses or arms, but searched the fellowships on one side and the other ; nor was there

Arthur and Gawain do best no knight that came against them but they pierced his shield or bore him to the ground, insomuch as none was there that might endure their buffets. Nabigant espieth Messire Gawain and cometh toward him, and Messire Gawain toward him again, and they hurtle together either on other so strongly that Messire Gawain beareth Nabigant to the ground, him and his horse together all in a heap. And King Arthur was not idle, for no knight durst come against him but he overthrew him, so as that all withdrew them back and avoided his buffets. And many knights did well that day at the assembly, but none might be the match of either of them twain in deeds of arms, (for, save it were Lancelot or Perceval, were no knights on live that had in them so much hardiment and valour.) After that it was evensong the knights drew them back to their tents, and they say all that the Knight of the Golden Arms and the Knight of the Red Arms had done better than they all at the assembly. King Arthur and Messire Gawain come back to the tent of the damsels, that make disarm them and do upon them the rich robes and make great joy of them. Thereupon, behold you, a dwarf that cometh: 'Damsels, make great joy! for all they of the assembly say with one accord that your knights have done best this day.' King Arthur and Messire Gawain sate to eat, and right well were they served of every kind of meats and of great cups of wine and sops in wine. King Arthur made the younger damsel sit beside him, and Messire Gawain the elder in

like manner, and when they had eaten they went to lie down and fell on sleep, for right sore weary were they and forspent of the many buffets they had given and received, and they slept until the morrow. Gawain's  
ill  
covenant

## IX

When the day appeared they rose up. Thereupon, behold you the younger damsel where she cometh and saluteth King Arthur. 'And you, damsel!' saith King Arthur, 'God give you joy and good adventure!' ('Sir,' saith she, 'I will that you bear to-day these white arms that you see here, and that you do no worse to-day than yesterday you did, sith that better you may not do.') 'Messire Gawain,' saith the elder damsel, 'Remember you of the King (there where his land was compassed about of a wall of stone,) and you harboured one night in his castle, what time you went to seek for the sword wherewith John Baptist was beheaded, when he was fain to take away the sword from you, whereof you had so sore misliking? Natheless, he yielded you up the sword upon covenant that you should do that which a damsel should first ask you to do thereafter, and you promised him loyally that so would you do?' 'Certes, damsel,' saith Messire Gawain, 'Well do I remember the same.' 'Now, therefore,' saith the damsel, 'would I fain prove whether you be indeed so loyal as men say, and whether you will hold your covenant that you made. Wherefore I pray and beseech you that this day you shall

Gawain doth worst be he that doth worst of all the knights at the assembly, and that you bear none other arms save your own only, so as that you shall be known again of all them that are there present. And, so you will not do this, then will you have failed of your covenant, and I myself will go tell the King that you have broken the promise that you made to him right loyally.' 'Damsel,' saith Messire Gawain, 'Never yet brake I covenant with none, so it were such as I might fulfil or another on my behalf.' King Arthur made arm him of the white arms that the younger damsel had given him, and Messire Gawain of his own, but sore it irked him of this that the damsel hath laid upon him to do, sith that needs must he lose worship and he hold to his covenant, albeit not for nought that is in the world will he fail of the promise he hath made. So they come into the assembly.

## X

King Arthur smiteth with his spurs like a good knight and overthroweth two knights in his onset, and Messire Gawain rideth a bandon betwixt two fellowships to be the better known. The most part say, 'See! There is Messire Gawain, the good knight that is King Arthur's nephew.' Nabigant of the Rock cometh toward him as fast as his horse may carry him, lance in rest. Messire Gawain seeth him coming toward him right furiously. He casteth his shield down on the ground and betaketh him to flight as swiftly as he may. They that beheld him, some two score or more, marvel thereof, and say, 'Did ever one see the like overpassing



owardize!’ Nabigant saith that he never **and is**  
et followed a knight that was vanquished, **shamed**  
or never will follow one of such conditions,  
or no great prize would it be to take him and  
in his horse. Other knights come to joust  
with him, but Messire Gawain fleeth and  
voideth them the best he may, and maketh  
emblance that none is there he durst abide.  
He draweth toward King Arthur for safety.  
The King hath great shame of this that he  
eth him do, and right sore pains hath he  
f defending Messire Gawain, for he holdeth  
close to him as the pie doth to the bramble  
hen the falcon would take her. In such  
ame and dishonour was Messire Gawain as  
ng as the assembly lasted, and the knights  
id that he had gotten him off with much less  
an he deserved, for that never had they seen  
craven knight at assembly of tournament as  
as he, nor never henceforth would they have  
ead of him as they had heretofore. From  
is day forward may many lightly avenge  
emselves upon him of their kinsfolk and  
ends that he hath slain by the forest. The  
sembly broke up in the evening, whereof the  
ing and Messire Gawain were right well  
ased. The knights disarm them at their  
stels and the King and Messire Gawain at  
e damsels’ tent.

## XI

With that, behold you! the dwarf that  
neth. ‘By my head, damsels, your knights  
from bad to worse! Of him in the white  
as one may even let pass, but Messire

The dwarf jeereth Gawain is the most coward ever saw I y  
and so he were to run upon me to-morrow a  
I were armed like as is he, I should think  
right well able to defend me against him. 'Y  
the devil took him to a place where is su  
plenty of knights, for the more folk that  
there the better may one judge of his  
conditions. And you, Sir,' saith he to  
King, 'Wherefore do you keep him compan  
You would have done best to-day had he  
been there. He skulked as close by you, to  
out of the buffets, as a hare doth to the w  
for the hounds. No business hath good kni  
to hold company with a coward. I say  
this for that I would make him out worse th  
he is, for I remember the two knights he sl  
before this tent.' The damsel heareth  
dwarf talking and smileth thereat, for  
understandeth that blame enough hath Mes  
Gawain had at the assembly. The knig  
said at their hostels that they knew not  
whom to give the Circlet of Gold, sith that  
Knight of the Golden Armour and he of  
Red Armour were not there; for they did  
best the first day of the assembly, and m  
they marvelled that they should not come w  
it was continued on the morrow. 'Gawa  
saith the King, 'Sore blame have you had  
day, and I myself have been all shamed  
your sake. Never thought I that so goo  
knight as you might ever have known hov  
counterfeit a bad knight as you did. You h  
done much for the love of the damsel, and r  
well had she avenged herself of you and

and done her great annoy. Howbeit, and Gawain  
 -morrow your cowardize be such as it hath and  
 sen to-day, never will the day be when you and  
 all not have blame thereof.' Arthur

## XII

'By my faith,' saith Messire Gawain, 'Be-  
 veth me do the damsel's pleasure sith that we  
 ve fallen by ill-chance into her power.' They  
 ent to bed at night and took their rest as soon  
 they had eaten, and on the morrow the  
 unsel came to Messire Gawain. 'I will,'  
 ith she, 'that you be clad in the same arms  
 was your comrade on the first day, right rich,  
 at I will lend you, and I will, moreover, that  
 u be knight so good as that never on any day  
 ere you better. But I command you, by the  
 ith you pledged me the other day, to obey  
 is caution, that you make yourself known to  
 one, and, so any man in the world shall ask  
 ur name, you shall say that you are the  
 ight of the Golden Arms.' 'Damsel,' saith  
 awain, 'Gramercy! I will do your pleasure.'  
 he younger damsel cometh back to the King:  
 Sir,' saith she, 'I will that you wear new arms:  
 ou shall bear them red, the same as Messire  
 awain bore the first day, and I pray you be  
 ch as you were the first day, or better.'

## XIII

'Damsel, I will do my best to amend myself  
 d my doings, and right well pleased am I of  
 at it pleaseth you to say.' Their horses were  
 parisoned and the knights mounted, all armed.

**Gawain** They come together to the tournament with :  
**winneeth** an onset as that they pass through the thic  
**the prize** of the press and overthrew knights and ho  
 as many as they encountered. King Ar  
 espieth Nabigant that came right gaily cap  
 soned, and smiteth him so passing stron  
 buffet in the midst of his breast that he bea  
 him down from his horse, in such sort  
 he breaketh his collar-bone, and presenteth  
 destrier, by his squire, to the younger dan  
 that maketh great joy thereof. And Mes  
 Gawain searcheth the fellowships on all si  
 and so well did he search that scarce was  
 might endure his blows. King Arthur is  
 idle, but pierceth shields and beateth in he  
 the while all look on in wonderment at him  
 Messire Gawain. The story saith that  
 King would have done still better but  
 he put not forth his full strength in deed  
 arms, for that Messire Gawain had done  
 ill the day before, and now he would fain  
 he should have the prize.

## XIV

The damsel that held the Golden Ci  
 was in the midst of the assembly of knights,  
 had set it in a right rich casket of ivory  
 precious stones, right worshipfully. When  
 damsel saw that the assembly was at an end,  
 made all the knights stay, and prayed them  
 should speak judgment true, concealing nou  
 who had best deserved of arms, and ought th  
 fore of right to have the Golden Circlet. T  
 said all, that of right judgment the Knight of

Golden Arms and he of the Red Arms ought to have the prize above all the others, but that of these two, he of the Golden Arms ought to have the prize, for so well did he the first day as that no knight might do better, and on the last day likewise, and that if he of the Red Arms had put forth his full strength on the last day, he could have done full as well or better. The Circlet of Gold was brought to Messire Gawain, but it was not known that it was he; and Messire Gawain would fain that it had been given to my lord King Arthur. The knights departed from the assembly. The King and Messire Gawain came back to the tent and brought the Golden Circlet, whereof the damsels made great joy. Thereupon, behold you! the dwarf that cometh back. 'Damsels, better is to lodge knights such as these than Messire Gawain the coward, the craven that had so much shame at the assembly! You yourselves could have been sore blamed had you lodged him. This knight hath won the Golden Circlet for force of arms, and Messire Gawain nought shame and reproach.' The damsel laugheth at this that the dwarf saith, and biddeth him on eyes and head, begone!

## XV

The King and Messire Gawain were discomfited. 'Sir,' saith the damsel, 'What will you do with the Golden Circlet?' 'Damsel,' saith Messire Gawain, 'I will bear it to him that first shall win it in sore peril of death, and delivered it to the Queen that ought to have kept it safe, of

**The** whom it hath been reft by force.' The  
**damsels** and Messire Gawain lay the night in the  
**thwarted** The younger damsel cometh to the  
 'Sir, many feats of arms have you done  
 assembly, as I have been told, for love of  
 and I am ready to reward you.' 'Da  
 right great thanks. Your reward and  
 service love I much, and your honour yet  
 wherefore I would that you should have  
 honour that any damsel may have, for in d  
 without honour ought none to put his aff  
 Our Lord God grant you to preserve y  
 'Damsel,' saith she to the other that  
 before Messire Gawain, 'This Knight  
 Messire Gawain have taken counsel toge  
 There is neither solace nor comfort in  
 Let us leave them to go to sleep, and if  
 may they have, and Lord God defend us  
 hereafter from such guests.' 'By my  
 saith the elder damsel, 'were it not for  
 Golden Circlet that he is bound of rig  
 deliver again to the Queen that had it in ch  
 who is my Lady, they should not depart  
 this land in such sort as they will. But  
 Messire Gawain still be nice as conce  
 damsels, at least I now know well that  
 loyal in another-wise, so as that he will not  
 of his word.'

## XVI

With that the damsels departed, as did  
 wise the King and Messire Gawain as so  
 they saw the day. Nabigant, that was wo  
 at the tournament, was borne away on a

Meliot of Logres was in quest of Messire **Meliot**  
 Gawain. He met the knights and the harness **seeketh**  
 that came from the assembly, and asked of many **Gawain**  
 if they could tell him tidings of King Arthur's  
 nephew, Messire Gawain, and the most part  
 answer, 'Yea, and right bad tidings enough.'  
 Then they ask him wherefore he demandeth.  
 Lords,' saith he, 'His liege man am I, and  
 I ought of right to defend my land against all  
 men, that Nabigant hath taken from me without  
 right nor reason, whom they are carrying from  
 hence in a litter, wherefore I am fain to  
 beseech Messire Gawain that he help me to  
 recover my land.' 'In faith, Sir Knight,' say  
 they, 'We know not of what avail he may be  
 to others that may not help himself. Messire  
 Gawain was at the assembly, but we tell you  
 for true, it was he that did worst thereat.'  
 'Alas,' saith Meliot of Logres, 'Then have I  
 lost my land, and he hath become even such an  
 one as you tell me.' 'You would readily  
 believe us,' say they, 'had you seen him at  
 the assembly!' Meliot turneth him back, right  
 sorrowful.

## XVII

King Arthur and Messire Gawain depart  
 from the tent, and come a great pace as though  
 they fain would escape thence to come nigher  
 the land where they would be, and great desire  
 had they of the coming of Lancelot. They  
 rode until that they came one night to the  
 Waste Manor whither the brachet led Messire  
 Gawain when he found the dead knight that

**The Waste Manor** Lancelot had slain. They lodged there the night, and found there knights and damsels of whom they were known. The Lady of the Waste Manor sent for succour to her knights, saying that she held there King Arthur that slew other knights, and that his nephew Messire Gawain was also there within, but dearly would she have loved that Lancelot had been with them that slew her brother. Knights in plenty came to her to do hurt to King Arthur and Messire Gawain, but she had at least so much courtesy in her that she would not suffer any of them to do them ill within her hold, albeit she kept seven of their number, full of great hardiment, to guard the entrance of the bridge, so that King Arthur and Messire Gawain might not depart thence save only amidst the points of their spears

## XVIII

This high history witnesseth us that Lancelot was departed from the Waste City wherein he was much honoured, and rode until that he came to a forest where he met Meliot of Logres, that was sore dismayed of the tidings he had heard of Messire Gawain. Lancelot asketh him whence he cometh, and he saith from seeking Messire Gawain, of whom he had tidings whereof he was right sorrowful. ‘How,’ saith Lancelot, ‘Is he then otherwise than well?’ ‘Yea,’ saith he, ‘As I have heard tell : for he wont to be good knight and hath now become evil. He was at the assembly of knights whereof I met the harness



and the fellowships, and they told me that **Lancelot** never yet was such cowardize in any knight, **and** out that a knight who was with him did right **Meliot** well. But howsoever he may have borne himself, right fain am I to find him, for, maugre what any may say, I may scarce believe that he is so bad after all.' 'Sir,' saith Lancelot, 'I will seek him for you, and you can come along with me and it seemeth you good.' Meliot of Logres betaketh him back with Lancelot. They ride until they happen by chance upon the Waste Manor where the King and Messire Gawain were lodged; and they were armed, and were minded to go forth from thence. But the seven knights guarded the issue, all armed. The King and Messire Gawain saw that no good would it do them to remain there within, wherefore they passed over the bridge and came perforce to the place where the seven knights were watching for them. Thereupon, they went toward them all armed and struck among them, and the knights received them on the points of their lances.

## XIX

Thereupon, behold you! Lancelot and the knight with him, whom they had not been looking for. Lancelot espied the King and Messire Gawain; then the knights cried out and struck among them as a hawk striketh amongst larks, and made them scatter on one side and the other. Lancelot hath caught one of his coming, and smiteth him with his spear through the body, and Meliot of Logres slayeth

**Arthur rescued** another. King Arthur knew Lancelot, and right glad was he to see him safe and sound, and was Messire Gawain likewise. Lancelot and Meliot of Logres made clear the passage for them. The knights departed, for longer durst they not abide. The damsel of the castle held a squire by the hand, that was right passing comely. She knew Lancelot, and when she saw him she called him.

## XX

‘Lancelot, you slew this squire’s brother and, please God, either he or another shall take vengeance thereof.’ Lancelot holdeth his peace when he heareth the dame speak, and departeth from the Waste Hold. Meliot of Logres knew Messire Gawain and Messire Gawain him again, and great joy made they the one of the other. ‘Sir,’ saith Meliot, ‘I am come to lay plaint before you of Nabigan of the Rock that challengeth me of the land whereof I am your man, and saith that he will defend it against none but you only. Sir, the day is full nigh, and if you come not to the day I shall have lost my quarrel, and you held me thereof in covenant what time I became your man.’ ‘Right fairly will I go,’ saith Messire Gawain. He goeth his way thither accordingly by leave of the King and Lancelot, and saith that he will return to them the speediest he may.

## XXI

King Arthur and Lancelot go their way as fast as they may toward the land that was Kin

Fisher-king's. Messire Gawain rideth until he cometh to the land of Nabigant of the Rock. Meliot doeth Nabigant to wit that Messire Gawain was come, and that he was ready to uphold his right by him that was his champion. Nabigant was whole of the wound he gat at the assembly, and held Messire Gawain of full small account for the cowardize that he saw him do, and bid his knights not meddle between them two, for, and Messire Gawain had been four knights he thought to vanquish them all. He issueth forth of his castle all armed, and is come there where Messire Gawain waited him. Messire Gawain seeth him coming, and so draweth on one side, and Nabigant, that was stark outrageous, setteth his spear in rest and cometh toward Messire Gawain without another word, and smiteth him on the shield so that he maketh his spear by all in pieces. And Messire Gawain catcheth him right in the midst of his breast, and pierceth him with his spear through the thick of his heart, and he falleth to the ground dead; and the knights run upon Messire Gawain; but he lightly delivereth himself of them, and Meliot of Logres likewise. Messire Gawain entereth the castle by force, doing battle against all the knights, and holdeth them in such a pass as that he maketh them do homage to Meliot of Logres, and deliver up to him the keys of the castle. He maketh them come to an assembly from the whole of the land they had reft away from him, and thereafter departeth and followeth after King Arthur. In the forest, he over-

Gawain  
 slayeth  
 Nabigant

**A** taketh a damsel that was going on her way :  
 damsel great pace.  
 seeketh  
 Gawain

## XXII

‘Damsel,’ saith Messire Gawain, ‘Lord God guide you, whither away so fast?’ ‘Sir,’ saith she, ‘I am going to the greatest assembly of knights you saw ever.’ ‘What assembly?’ saith Messire Gawain. ‘Sir,’ saith she, ‘At the Palace Meadow, but the knight I am seeking is he that won the Circlet of Gold at the Meadow of the Tent. Fair Sir, can you give me any tidings of him?’ saith she. ‘Damsel,’ saith Messire Gawain, ‘What would you do herein?’ ‘Certes, Sir, I would right fain find him. My Lady, that kept the Circlet of Gold for the son of the Widow Lady, that won it aforetime, hath sent me to seek him.’ ‘For what intent, damsel?’ saith Messire Gawain. ‘Sir, my Lady sendeth for him and beseecheth him by me, for the sake of the Saviour of the World, that if he had ever pity of dame or damsel, he will take vengeance on Nabigant that hath slain her men and destroyed her land, for she hath been told how he that won back the Golden Circlet ought of right to take vengeance upon him.’

## XXIII

‘Damsel,’ saith Messire Gawain, ‘Be not any longer troubled hereof, for I tell you that the knight that won the Golden Circlet by prize of arms hath killed Nabigant already.’ ‘Sir,’ saith she, ‘How know you this?’ ‘I know the knight well,’ saith he, ‘And I saw

a slay him, and behold, here is the Circlet **Evil**  
 Gold that I have as a token hereof, for that **tidings**  
 beareth it to him that hath won the Graal, *is his kingdom*  
 the intent that your Lady may be quit of her *is beaueged*  
 urge.' Messire Gawain showeth her the *his absence*  
 olden Circlet in the casket of ivory, that he  
 set very nigh himself. Right joyful was the  
 counsel that the matter had thus fallen out, and  
 with her way back again to tell her Lady of  
 joy. Messire Gawain goeth on his way  
 toward the assembly, for well knoweth he that,  
 King Arthur and Lancelot have heard the  
 things, there will they be. He goeth thither-  
 ward as fast as he may, and as straight, and  
 once hath he ridden away or ever he met a  
 hire that seemed right weary, and his hackney  
 was worn of the way. Messire Gawain asked  
 whence he came, and the squire said to  
 him, 'From the land of King Arthur, where  
 great war toward, for that none knoweth not  
 what hath become of him. Many folk go about  
 saying that he is dead, for never sithence that  
 he departed from Cardoil, and Messire Gawain  
 and Lancelot with him, have no tidings been  
 heard of him; and he left the Queen at Cardoil  
 to take his place, and also on account of her  
 husband's death, and the most part say that he is  
 dead. Briant of the Isles and my Lord Kay  
 with him are burning his land, and carrying  
 plunder before all the castles. Of all the  
 knights of the Table Round are there now no  
 more than five and thirty, and of these are ten  
 wounded, and they are in Cardoil, and there  
 protect the land the best they may.'

Arthur  
winneth

## XXIV

When Messire Gawain heareth these tidings they touch his heart right sore, so that he goeth the straightest he may toward the assembly and the squire with him that was sore for done. Messire Gawain found King Arthur and Lancelot, and the knights were come from all the kingdom to the piece of ground. For a knight was come thither that had brought a white destrier and borne thither a right rich crown of gold, and it was known throughout all the lands that marched with this, that the knight that should do best at the assembly should have the destrier and the crown, for the Queen thought it was dead, and it would behove him to guard and defend the land whereof she had been Lady. On account of these tidings had come thither great plenty of folk and of folk. King Arthur and Messire Gawain and Lancelot were of them of one side. The story saith that at the assembly King Arthur bare the red shield that the damsel gave him; Messire Gawain had his own, such as he was wont to bear, and Lancelot a green shield that he bare for the love of the knight that was slain for helping him in the forest. They struck into the assembly like lions unchained, and cast down three knights at their first onset. They searched the fellowships on every side, smote down knights and overthrew horses.

## XXV

King Arthur overtook no knight but he clave his shield to the boss; all swerved aside and

avoided his buffets. And Messire Gawain and a dolorous Lancelot are not idle on the other hand, but prize each held well his place. But the more part had wonderment looking at the King, for he holdeth him at bay like a lion when the stag-hounds would attack him. The assembly lasted throughout on such wise, and when it came to an end, the knights said and adjudged that the Knight of the Red Shield had surpassed all other in doing well. The knight that had brought the crown came to the King, but knew him not a whit: 'Sir,' saith he, 'You have by your good deeds of arms won this crown of gold and this destrier, whereof ought you to make great joy, so only you have so much valour in you as that you may defend the land of the best earthly Queen that is dead, and whether the King be alive or dead none knoweth, wherefore great worship will it be to yourself and you may have prowess to maintain the land, for right broad is it and right rich and of high sovranty.'

## XXVI

Saith King Arthur, 'Whose was the land, and what was the name of the Queen whose crown I see?' 'Sir, the King's name was Arthur, and the best king in the world was he; but in his kingdom the more part say that he is dead. And this crown was the crown of Queen Guenievre that is dead and buried, whereof is sore sorrow. The knights that may not leave Cardoil lest Briant of the Isles should seize the city, they sent me to the kingdom of Logres and charged me with the crown and destrier for

**A** that I have knowledge of the isles and foreign  
**grievous** lands; wherefore they prayed me I should  
**sorrow** among the assemblies of knights, that so I might  
 hear tidings of my Lord King Arthur and  
 Lord Gawain and Lancelot, and, so I might  
 find them, that I should tell them how the lady  
 hath fallen into this grievous sorrow.' King  
 Arthur heareth tidings whereof he is  
 sorrowful. He draweth on one side, and the  
 knights make the most grievous dole in the  
 world. Lancelot knoweth not what he may do  
 and saith between his teeth that now hath his  
 joy come to an end and his knighthood is of  
 avail, for that he hath lost the high Queen,  
 valiant, that heart and comfort gave him an  
 encouragement to do well. The tears ran down  
 from his comely eyes right amidst his face  
 through the ventail, and, had he durst make  
 other dole, yet greater would it have been.  
 In the mourning the King made is there nought  
 to speak, for this sorrow resembleth none other.  
 He holdeth the crown of gold, and looketh  
 oft at the destrier for love of her, for he  
 hath given it her; and Messire Gawain may  
 not stint of making dole.

## XXVII

'Certes,' saith he, 'Now may I well say that  
 the best Queen in the world and of most under-  
 standing is dead, nor never hereafter shall be  
 none of equal worth.' 'Sir,' saith Lancelot  
 to the King, 'So it please you, and Messire Gawain  
 be willing, I will go back toward Cardoill, to  
 help to defend your land to the best I may,'



re is it discounselled, until such time as you Lancelot  
all be come from the Graal.' 'Certes,' saith returneth  
Messire Gawain to the King, 'Lancelot hath  
oken well, so you grant him your consent.'  
That do I with right good will,' saith the  
ing, 'And I pray him right heartily that he  
thither and be guardian of my land and the  
vernance thereof, until such time as God shall  
ve brought me back.' Lancelot taketh leave  
the King and goeth his way back, all sorrow-  
g and full of discontent.

## BRANCH XXII

### INCIPIT

**Perceval's castle** **O**F Lancelot the story is here silent, and beginneth another branch of the Graal the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

### TITLE I

You may well understand that King Arthur is no whit joyful. He maketh the wdestrier go after him, and hath the crown of gold full near himself. They ride until they come to the castle that belonged to King Fisher, and they found it as rich and as you have heard told many a time. Perceval that was there within, made right great joy of their coming, as did all the priests and all the knights. Perceval leadeth King Arthur, when he was disarmed, into the chapel where the Graal was, and Messire Gawain maketh present to Perceval of the Golden Circlet, and telleth him that the Queen sendeth it to him, relateth also how Nabigant had seized it, moreover, how Nabigant was dead. King offereth the crown that had been Queen Guenievre's. When Perceval knew that she was dead, he was right sorrowful thereof in his heart, and wept and lamented her right sweetly. He showeth them the tomb of King Fisher

and telleth them that none had set (the tabernacle **Three names thereof** here above) the coffin, but only the commandment of Our Lord, and he sheweth them a rich pall that is upon the coffin, and telleth them that every day they see a new one there not less rich than is this one. King Arthur looketh at the sepulchre and saith that never tofore hath he seen none so costly. A smell issueth therefrom full delicate and sweet of savour. The King sojourneth in the castle and is highly honoured, and beholdeth the riches and the lordship and the great abundance that is everywhere in the castle, insomuch that therein is nought wanting that is needful for the bodies of noble folk. Perceval had made set the bodies of the dead knights in a charnel beside an old chapel in the forest, and the body of his uncle that had slain himself so evilly. Behind the castle was a river, as the history testifieth, whereby all good things came to the castle, and this river was right fair and plenteous. Josephus witnesseth as that it came from the Earthly Paradise and compassed the castle around and ran on through the forest as far as the house of a worshipful hermit, and there lost the course and had peace in the earth. All along the valley thereof was great plenty of everything continually, and nought was ever lacking in the rich castle that Perceval had won. The castle, so saith the history, had three names.

## II

One of the names was Eden, the second, Castle of Joy, and the third, Castle of Souls.

The Now Josephus saith that none never passed at  
 bell and therein but his soul went to Paradise. K  
 chalice Arthur was one day at the castle windows w  
 Messire Gawain. The King seeth com  
 before him beyond the bridge a great proc  
 sion of folk one before another; and he t  
 came before was all clad in white, and bar  
 full great cross, and each of the others a li  
 one, and the more part came singing with s  
 voices and bear candles burning, and there  
 one behind that carried a bell with the clap  
 and all at his neck. 'Ha, God,' saith K  
 Arthur, 'What folk be these?' 'Sir,' s  
 Perceval, 'I know them all save the l  
 They are the hermits of this forest, that co  
 to chant within yonder before the Holy Gr  
 three days in the week.'

## III

When the hermits came nigh the castle,  
 King went to meet them, and the knights ad  
 the crosses and bow their heads before the g  
 men. As soon as they were come into  
 holy chapel, they took the bell from the  
 and smote thereon at the altar, and then  
 it on the ground, and then began they  
 service, most holy and most glorious. T  
 history witnesseth us that in the land of K  
 Arthur at this time was there not a sir  
 chalice. The Graal appeared at the sac  
 of the mass, in five several manners that n  
 ought not to tell, for the secret things of  
 sacrament ought none to tell openly but he  
 whom God hath given it. King Arthur beh

the changes, the last whereof was the change **An**  
to a chalice. And the hermit that chanted **ancient**  
the mass found a brief under the corporal **friend**  
and declared the letters, to wit, that our Lord  
would that in such vessel should His body  
be sacrificed, and that it should be set upon  
record. The history saith not that there were  
chalices elsewhere, but that in all Great  
Britain and in the whole kingdom was none.  
King Arthur was right glad of this that he had  
seen, and had in remembrance the name and the  
vision of the most holy chalice. Then he  
asked the hermit that bare the bell, whence  
this thing came? 'Sir,' saith he to Messire  
Gawayn, 'I am the King for whom you slew  
the giant, whereby you had the sword where-  
with St. John was beheaded, that I see on this  
scar. I made baptize me before you and all  
those of my kingdom, and turn to the New  
Law, and thereafter I went to a hermitage by  
the sea, far from folk, where I have been of a  
long space. I rose one night at matins and  
looked under my hermitage and saw that a ship  
had taken haven there. I went thither when  
the sea was retreated, and found within the ship  
three priests and their clerks, that told me their  
names and how they were called in baptism.  
All three were named Gregory, and they came  
from the Land of Promise, and told me that  
Solomon had cast three bells, one for the Saviour  
of the World, and one for His sweet Mother, and  
one for the honour of His saints, wherefore  
they had brought this hither by His command-  
ment into this kingdom for that we had none

**Aristot of** here. They told me that and I should bea  
**Moraine** into this castle, they would take all my  
 upon themselves, by Our Lord's pleasure,  
 such sort as that I should be quit thereof. A  
 I in like manner have brought it hither by  
 commandment of God, who willeth that  
 should be the pattern of all those that shall  
 fashioned in the realm of this island where ne  
 aforetime have been none.' 'By my fai  
 saith Messire Gawain to the hermit, 'I k  
 you right well for a worshipful man, for  
 held your covenant truly with me.' R  
 Arthur was right glad of this thing, as v  
 all they that were within. It seemed  
 that the noise thereof was like the noise tha  
 had heard sound ever since he had moved f  
 Cardoil. The hermits went their way eac  
 his hermitage when they had done the servi

## IV

One day, as the King sate at meat in the  
 with Perceval and Messire Gawain and  
 ancient knights, behold you therewithal on  
 the three Damsels of the Car that cometh,  
 she was smitten all through her right  
 'Sir,' saith she to Perceval, 'Have merc  
 your mother and your sister and on us. Ar  
 of Moraine, that is cousin to the Lord of  
 Moors that you slew, warreth upon your mo  
 and hath carried off your sister by force int  
 castle of a vavasour of his, and saith that he  
 take her to wife, and will have all her land  
 your mother ought to hold of right, ma  
 your head. But never had knight custoi

vel as he, for when he shall have espoused  
 e damsel, whomsoever she may be, yet will  
 : never love her so well but that he shall cut off  
 er head with his own hand, and so thereafter  
 seek for another to slay in like manner.  
 atheless in one matter hath he good custom,  
 at never will he do shame to none until such  
 ne as he hath espoused her. Sir, I was with  
 y Lady your sister when he maimed me in  
 is manner. Wherefore your mother sendeth  
 u word and prayeth you that you succour her,  
 r you held her in covenant that so you would  
 and she should have need thereof and you  
 ould know it; for and you consent to her  
 jury and loss, the shame will be your own.'  
 erceval neard these tidings, and sore sorrowful  
 as he thereof. 'By my head,' saith the King  
 Perceval, 'I and my nephew, so please you,  
 ill go to help you.' 'Sir,' saith he, 'Gra-  
 ercy, but go and achieve your own affair also,  
 r sore need have you thereof; wherefore I  
 ay and beseech you that you be guardian of  
 e castle of Camelot, if that my lady mother  
 all come thither, for thereof make I you lord  
 d champion, and albeit the castle be far away  
 om you, yet garnish it and guard it, for it is  
 ilded in a place right fair.'

## V

Lords, think not that it is this Camelot  
 hereof these tellers of tales do tell their tales,  
 ere, where King Arthur so often held his  
 urt. This Camelot that was the Widow  
 ady's stood upon the uttermost headland of

The two  
 Camelots

**Arthur's** the wildest isle of Wales by the sea to the W  
**Camelot** Nought was there save the hold and the for  
and the waters that were round about it. T  
other Camelot, of King Arthur's, was situate  
the entrance of the kingdom of Logres, :  
was peopled of folk and was seated at the h  
of the King's land, for that he had in  
governance all the lands that on that :  
marched with his own.



## BRANCH XXIII

### TITLE I

**O**F Perceval the story is here silent, and **Arthur** saith that King Arthur and Messire **and** Gawain have taken leave of Perceval and all **Gawain** hem of the castle. The King leaveth him the good destrier that he won, with the golden crown. They have ridden, he and Messire Gawain together, until they are come to a vast ancient castle that stood in a forest. The castle would have been right fair and rich had any folk wonned therein, but none there were save one old priest and his clerk that lived within by their own toil. The King and Messire Gawain lodged there the night, and on the morrow went into a right rich chapel that was therein to hear mass, and it was painted all around of right rich colours of gold and azure and other colours. The images were right fair that were there painted, and the figures of them for whom the images were made. The King and Messire Gawain looked at them gladly. When the mass was said, the priest cometh to them and saith : ' Lords,' saith he, ' These imagings are right fair, and he that had them made is full loyal, and dearly loved the lady and her son for whom he had them made. Sir,' saith the priest, ' It is a true history.' ' Of whom is the history, fair Sir ?'

**A strange** saith King Arthur. 'Of a worshipful vavasour  
**story** that owned this hold, and of Messire Gawain  
King Arthur's nephew, and his mother. So  
saith the priest, 'Messire Gawain was born  
there within and held up and baptized, as you  
may see here imaged, and he was named Gawain  
for the sake of the lord of this castle that bore  
that name. His mother, that had him by King  
Lot, would not that it should be known. So she  
set him in a right fair coffer, and prayed a  
good man of this castle that he would carry him  
away and leave him where he might perish,  
and if he would not do so, she would make  
another do it. This Gawain, that was loved  
and would not that the child should be  
to death, made seal letters at the pillow-bere  
his cradle that he was of lineage royal on  
one side and the other, and set therein gold and  
silver so as that the child might be nurtured  
great plenty, and spread above the child a rich  
rich coverlid. He carried him away to a  
distant country, and so came one early mo-  
ning to a little homestead where dwelt a rich  
worshipful man. He delivered the child  
him and his wife, and bade them they should  
keep him and nurture him well, and told them  
that it might be much good should come to them  
thereof. The vavasour turned him back, and  
they took charge of the child and nurtured him  
until that he were grown, and then took him  
to Rome to the Holy Father and showed him  
sealed letters. The Holy Father saw them and  
understood that he was the son of a King. So he  
had pity upon him, and gave him to under-

that he was of his kindred. After that, he was elected to be Emperor of Rome. But he would not be Emperor lest he should be reproached of his birth that had before been concealed from him. He departed thence, and lived afterwards within yonder. Now is it said that he is one of the best knights in the world, insomuch that none durst take possession of this castle for bread of him, nor of this great forest that lieth round about it. For, when the vavasour that dwelt here was dead, he left to Messire Gawain, his foster-son, this castle, and made me guardian hereof until such time as Messire Gawain should return.' of  
Gawain's  
birth

## II

The King looketh at Messire Gawain, and seeth him stoop his head toward the ground for shame. 'Fair nephew, be not ashamed, for as well might you reproach me of the same. Of your birth hath there been great joy, and dearlyought one to love the place and honour it, where so good a knight as are you was born.' When the priest understood that it was Messire Gawain, he made great cheer to him, and was all shamed of that he had recorded as concerning his birth. But he saith to him: 'Sir, small blame ought you to have herein, for you were confirmed in the law that God hath established and in loyalty of marriage of King Lot and your mother. This thing King Arthur well knoweth, and our Lord God be praised for that you have come hither!'

## BRANCH XXIV

### TITLE I

Of **Meliant** **H**ERE the story is silent of the king's  
dom, and of King Arthur and Messire  
Gawain that remain in the castle to maintain and  
guard it until they shall have garnished it with  
folk. Here speaketh it word of the knight  
son of the Waste Manor, there whither the  
brachet led Messire Gawain where he found the  
knight that Lancelot had slain. He had one  
son whose name was Meliant, and he had not  
forgotten his father's death; rather, there  
did wrath rankle in his heart. He heard  
tell that Briant of the Isles had great force  
and great puissance, and that he warred upon  
King Arthur's land, insomuch as that he had  
already slain many of his knights. Thither  
ward goeth he, and is come to where Briant  
was in a castle of his own. He telleth him  
how Lancelot had slain his father in such sort  
and prayeth him right courteously that he would  
make him knight, for that right fain would he  
avenge his father, and therefore would he help  
him in the war the best he might. Briant made  
much joy thereof, and made him knight in right  
costly sort, and he was the comeliest knight and  
the most valiant of his age in Briant's court  
and greatly did he desire to meet with Lancelot.  
They marvelled much in the land and kingdom.

that had become of him. The more part and thought that he was dead, albeit dead he was Lancelot, but rather sound and hale and whole, had not been for the death of Queen Guenievre, whereof the sorrow so lay at his heart that he might not forget it. He rode one day amidst forest, and overtook a knight and a damsel that made great joy together, singing and making sport. 'By God,' saith the damsel, 'If this night that cometh here will remain, he shall have right good lodging. It is already night-tide, and never will he find hostel so good to-day.' 'Damsel,' saith Lancelot, 'Of good hostel have I sore need, for I am more than enough weary.' 'So be all they,' saith she, 'that come from the land of the rich King of Fisherman, for none may suffer the pain and travail and he be not good knight.'

## II

'Ah, damsel,' saith Lancelot, 'Which is the way to the castle whereof you speak?' 'Sir,' saith the knight, 'You will go by this cross that you see before you, and we will go by that other way, to a certain hold. Haply we shall find you at the castle or ever you depart thence.' Lancelot goeth his way and leaveth them. 'By my head,' saith the damsel to the knight, 'This knight that goeth there is Lancelot. He knoweth me not, albeit I know him well, and I hear that he is sore troubled of his sorrow and mis-ease. Wherefore, please God, I will have vengeance of him or ever he departeth from the castle. Hither he goeth to harbour. He made marry

The perforce a knight that loved me better than  
 Castle of aught beside, and to a damsel that he loved  
 Griffons a whit. And so much might he still be  
 perceive when he saw that she ate not at  
 table, but was seated along with the squires,  
 that none did aught for her at the castle.  
 the knight will not abandon her for his  
 honour, and for that I should be blamed there.  
 The evening draweth on and Lancelot go  
 toward the castle, that was right uneath to  
 and in an unfrequented part. He espieth  
 at the head of the forest, and seeth that it  
 large and strong, with strong barbicans  
 battelled, and at the entrance of the gates  
 were fifteen heads of knights hanging.  
 found without a knight that came from  
 forest, and asked him what castle it was, and  
 made answer that it was called the Castle of  
 Griffon. 'And why are these heads hanging  
 this door?' 'Sir,' saith he, 'The daughter  
 the lord of the castle is the fairest in the wo  
 and that is known in any kingdom, and ne  
 must she be offered to wife to all knights t  
 harbour within. He that can draw a sw  
 that is fixed in a column in the midst of  
 hall, and fetch it forth, he shall have her  
 right without forfeit.

### III

'All these have made assay whose heads  
 see hanging at the door, but never might n  
 of them remove the sword, and on this occa  
 were they beheaded. Now is it said that n  
 may draw it forth, unless he that draweth

better knight than another, and needs must he be one of them that have been at the Graal. But, and you be minded to believe me, fair Sir,' saith the knight, 'You will go elsewhither, for all lodging is it in a place where one must needs set body and life in adventure of death, and none ought to be blamed for escaping from his own harm. Sir, the castle is right fell, for it hath underground, at the issue of a cavern that is there, a lion and a griffon, that have devoured more than half a hundred knights.' 'Sir,' saith Lancelot, 'It is evening, nor know I how I may go farther this day, for I know not whither to go sith that I know not the places nor the ways of the forest.' 'Sir,' saith the knight, 'I speak only for your own good, and God grant you depart hence, honour safe.' Lancelot findeth the door of the castle all open, and entereth in, all armed, and alighteth before the master-hall. The King was leaning at the windows, and biddeth stall his horse.

## IV

Lancelot is entered into the hall, and findeth knights and damsels at the tables and playing at the chess, but none did he find to salute him nor make him cheer of his coming save the lord only, for such was the custom of the castle. The lord bade him be disarmed. 'Sir,' saith he, 'Right well may you allow me wear my arms, for they be the fairest garniture and the richest I have.' 'Sir,' saith the lord of the castle, 'No knight eateth armed within yonder, but he that cometh armed in hither disarmeth

Lancelot himself by my leave. He may take his arms in peril again without gainsay so neither I nor other desire to do him a hurt.' With that two squires disarm him. The lord of the castle maketh bring a right rich robe wherein to apparel him. The tables were set and the meats served. The damsel issued forth of her chamber and was accompanied of two knights as far as the hall. She looketh at Lancelot, and seeth that he is a right comely knight, and much liketh her of his bearing and countenance, and she thinketh to herself that sore pity would it be so comely knight should have his head smitten off.

## V

Lancelot saluted the damsel and made great cheer, and when they had eaten in hall, forthwith behold you, the damsel where she cometh that Lancelot overtook in the forest with the knight. 'Sir,' saith she to the lord of the castle, 'You have harboured this night your deadly enemy that slew your brother at the Waste Manor.' 'By my faith,' saith the lord of the manor, 'I think not so, for him would I not have harboured, nor will I not believe it for true until such time as I have proved it.' 'Sir,' saith he to Lancelot, 'Make the demand that the others make!' 'What is it?' saith Lancelot. 'See there my daughter! Ask her of me, and if you be such as you ought to be, I will give her to you.' 'Sir,' saith Lancelot, 'No knight is there in the world so good but ought to plume him upon having her to wife, so always she were willing, and, so I thought



hat you would be willing to give her to me, Lancelot would willingly ask you.' Lancelot spake otherwise than as he thought, for the departing of the Queen and the sorrow thereof lay so at his heart that never again might he lean upon any love in the world, neither of dame nor damsel. He asked his daughter of the knight of the castle, and came before him to save the custom so that he might not have blame thereof. And he showed him the sword that was in the column, all inlaid with gold. 'Go,' saith he, 'and fulfil the custom, as other knights have done.' 'What is it?' saith Lancelot. They might not draw forth the sword from the column, and so failed of my daughter and of their lives.' 'Lord God,' saith Lancelot, 'Defend me from this custom!' And he ran toward the column as fast as he may, and seizeth the sword with both hands. So soon as he touched it, the sword draweth it forth with such a wrench that the column cracked thereof. The damsel was right joyful to see that, albeit she misdoubted the fellness and cruelty of her father, for never yet had she seen a knight that pleased her so much to love her. 'Sir,' saith the other damsel, 'I tell you plainly, this is Lancelot, the outrageous knight that slew your brother. Natheless, is it no wonder that he is one of the best knights of the world, albeit by the stoutness of his knighthood and his valour many an outrage hath he done, and more shall he yet do and he escape you, for so you will believe me, you will never see him to depart thus; sith that and you

Lancelot  
draweth  
a sword

**A** kill him or slay him you will save the life of  
**damsel** many a knight.' The daughter of the lord of  
**loveth** the castle is sore displeased of the damsel for  
**Lancelot** this that she saith, and looketh at Lancelot  
from time to time and sigheth, but more durst  
she not do. Much marvelleth she, sith that  
Lancelot hath drawn the sword forth of the  
column, that he asketh her not of her father as  
his own liege woman, but he was thinking of  
another thing, and never was he so sorrowful of  
any lady as he was for the Queen. But what-  
soever thought or desire he may have therein,  
he telleth the lord of the castle that he holdeth  
him to his covenant made at such time as the  
sword was still fixed in the column. 'I have  
a right not to hold thereto,' saith the lord of the  
castle, 'Nor shall I break not my vow and I  
fail you herein; for no man is bound to give  
his daughter to his mortal enemy. Sith that  
you have slain my brother, you are my mortal  
enemy, and were I to give her to you, she  
ought not to wish it, and were she to grant you  
her love she would be a fool and a madwoman.  
Right sorrowful is the damsel of this that she  
heareth her father say. She would fain that  
Lancelot and she were in the forest, right in  
the depth thereof. But Lancelot had no mind  
to be as she was thinking. The lord of the  
castle made guard the gateway of the castle  
well, in such sort that Lancelot might issue  
therefrom on no side. Afterward he bade his  
knights privily that they take heed on their  
lives that they be all ready on the morrow all  
all garnished of their arms, for that it was

purpose to smite off Lancelot's head and hang  
above all the others.

and  
sendeth  
him  
counsel

## VI

The daughter of the lord knew these tidings and was right sorrowful thereof, for she thinketh ever more to have joy at heart and he shall be slain in such manner. She sendeth him greeting by her own privy messenger, as she loveth him better than aught else living in the world, and so biddeth and prayeth him be furnished of his arms, and ready to protect his life, for that her father is fain to smite off his head. 'Sir,' saith the messenger, 'Your force would avail you nought as against my lord, for to-morrow there will be a dozen knights all armed at the issue of the gate whereby you entered to-night, and he saith that he purposeth to cut off your head there where he cut the heads off the other knights. Without the gate there will likewise be another dozen knights all armed. No knight is there in the world so good as that he might issue forth of this castle through the midst of these four and twenty knights, but my lady sendeth you word that there is a cavern under this castle that goeth thencefrom underground as far as the forest, so that a knight may well pass thereby all armed, but there is therein a lion, the fiercest and most horrible in the world, and two serpents that are called griffons, that have the face of a man and the beaks of birds and eyes of an owl and teeth of a dog and ears of an ass and feet of a lion and tail of a serpent, and they have couched

Lancelot them therewithin, but never saw no man beast  
 mishiketh so fell and felonous. Wherefore the damsel  
 it biddeth you go by that way, by everything that  
 you have ever loved, and that you fail her not  
 for she would fain speak with you at the issue  
 of the cavern in an orchard that is nigh a right  
 broad river not far from this castle, and will  
 make your destrier be brought after you under-  
 ground.' 'By my head,' saith Lancelot, 'And  
 she had not conjured me in such sort, and I were  
 it not for love of herself, I would have rather set  
 myself in hazard with the knights than with  
 the wild beasts, for far fainer would I have  
 delivered myself from them, and so I might  
 than go forth in such-wise.' 'She sendeth you  
 word,' saith the messenger, 'that so you do not  
 thus, no further trouble will she take concerning  
 you. She doth it of dread lest she lose your  
 love; and here behold a brachet that she  
 sendeth you by me that you will carry with  
 you into the cavern. So soon as you shall  
 see the serpent griffons that have couched them  
 therein, you shall show them this and cast her  
 down before them. The griffons love her as  
 much as one beast may love another, and I shall  
 have such joy and such desire to play with the  
 brachet that they will leave you alone, and I have  
 such good will toward you that they will not  
 look at you after to do you any hurt. But no  
 man is there in the world, no matter how well  
 soever he were armed, nor how puissant soever  
 he were in himself, might never pass them  
 otherwise, but he should be devoured of them.  
 But no safeguard may you have as against the

ion but of God only and your own hardiment.' but  
 'Tell my damsel,' saith Lancelot, 'that all her escapeth  
 commandment will I do, but this cowardize thereby  
 resembleth none other, that I shall go fight with  
 beasts and leave to do battle with knights.'  
 This was then repeated to the damsel, that  
 marvelled her much thereat, and said that he  
 was the hardiest knight in the world.

## VII

Lancelot armed him toward daybreak, and  
 had his sword girt, his shield at his neck, and  
 his spear in his hand. So he entered into the  
 cavern, all shamefast, and the brachet followeth  
 after, that he deigned not to carry, and so  
 cometh he to the place where the griffons were.  
 So soon as they heard him coming they dress  
 them on their feet, and then writhe along as  
 serpents, then cast forth such fire, and so bright  
 flame amidst the rock, as that all the cavern is  
 lighted up thereof, and they see by the bright-  
 ness of light of their jaws the brachet coming.  
 So soon as they have espied her, they carry  
 her in their claws and make her the greatest  
 cheer in the world. Lancelot passeth beyond  
 without gainsay, and espieth, toward the issue  
 of the cavern, the lion that was come from the  
 forest all famished. He cometh thither right  
 hardily, sword drawn. The lion cometh  
 toward him, jaws yawning, and claws bared,  
 hinking to fix them in his habergeon, but  
 Lancelot preventeth him and smiteth him so  
 stoutly that he cutteth off thigh and leg  
 together. When the lion feeleth himself thus

Lancelot maimed, he seizeth him by the teeth and the  
 slayeth claws of his fore feet and rendeth away half  
 a lion the skirt of his habergeon. Thereupon Lancelot  
 waxeth wroth. He casteth his shield to the ground and approacheth the lion closer. He seeth that he openeth his jaws wide to avenge himself, and thrusteth his sword the straightest he may into his gullet, and the lion giveth out a roar and falleth dead. The damsel that had come into the cavern, heareth that the lion is dead.

## VIII

Lancelot issueth forth and so cometh into the orchard beside the forest, and wiped his sword on the freshness of the green grass. Thereupon behold you the damsel that cometh 'Sir,' saith she to Lancelot, 'Are you wounded in any place?' 'Damsel, nowhere, thank God!' Another damsel leadeth a horse into the orchard. The damsel of the castle looketh at Lancelot. 'Sir,' saith the damsel, 'Meseemeth that you are not over joyous.' 'Damsel,' saith he, 'If I be not, I have good right, for I have lost the thing in the world that most I loved.' 'And you have won me,' saith she, 'so you remain not here, that am the fairest damsel in this kingdom, and I have saved you your life for this, that you grant me your love, for mine own would I fain give you.' 'Gramercy, damsel,' saith Lancelot, 'Your love and your good will fain would I have; but neither you nor none other damsel ought not to have affiance in me, and I might

soon set carelessly aside the love to whom  
 y heart owed its obedience, for the worthiness  
 and the courtesy that were lodged in her. Nor  
 ever hereafter, so long as I live, shall I love  
 one other in like manner; wherefore all others  
 commend I to God, and to yourself, as for  
 have-taking to one at whose service I fain  
 could be; I say that if you shall have need  
 of me, and so I be in place and free, I will  
 do all I may to protect your honour.' and  
 denieth  
 the  
 damsel

## IX

'Ha, God!' saith the damsel, 'How am I  
 trayed, sith that I am parted from the best  
 knight in the world! Lancelot, you have done  
 at which never yet no knight might do!  
 Now am I grieved that you should escape on  
 such wise, and that your life hath been saved in  
 this manner by me. Better should I love you  
 mine own dead, than another's living. Now  
 would I fain that you had had your head  
 bitten off, and that it were hanging with the  
 others! So would I solace myself by beholding  
 it!' Lancelot took no account of that he heard,  
 for the grief that lay at his heart of the Queen.  
 He mounteth on his horse and issueth forth of  
 the orchard by a postern gate, and entereth into  
 the forest, and commendeth him to God. The  
 lord of the Castle of the Griffons marvelleth  
 much that Lancelot delayeth so long. He  
 winketh that he durst not come down, and  
 saith to his knights, 'Let us go up and cut off  
 his head, sith that he durst not come down.'  
 He maketh search for him all through the hall

Lancelot and the chambers, but findeth him not. **rideth** hath gone,' saith he, 'through the cavern **away** have the griffons devoured him.' So he saw the twain most hardy of his knights to. But the brachet had returned after the day whereof the griffons were wroth, and forthwith seized on the two knights that came into their cavern and slew them and devoured

## X

When the lord of the castle knew it, he went into the chamber where his daughter was and found her weeping, and thinketh that for the two knights that are dead. Now he brought him that the lion is dead at the mouth of the cavern, and thereby well knoweth he that Lancelot is gone. He biddeth his knights to follow after him, but none was there so bold as that he durst follow. The damsel was so fain they should go after him, if only she might bring him back to the castle, for so mortally was she taken of his love that she thought of none other thing. But Lancelot had her not in remembrance, but only went on and rode on sadly right amidst the forest, and looked from time to time at the rent that he had made in his habergeon. He rideth until it is come toward evening to a great valley where was forest on the one side and the other, and the valley stretched onward half a score leagues Welsh. He looketh to the right and on the top of the mountain beside the valley seeth a chapel newly builded that was right



and rich, and it was covered of lead, and had Lancelot at the back two quoins that seemed to be of gold at Avalon. By the side of this chapel were three houses dight right richly, each standing by itself facing the chapel. There was a right fair grave-yard round about the chapel, that was enclosed at the compass of the forest, and a spring came down, full clear, from the heights of the forest before the chapel and ran into the valley with a great rushing; and each of the houses had its own orchard, and the orchard an enclosure. Lancelot heareth espers being chanted in the chapel, and seeth the path that turned thitherward, but the mountain is so rugged that he could not go long it on horseback. So he alighteth, and leadeth his horse after him by the reins until he cometh nigh the chapel.

## XI

There were three hermits therewithin that had sung their vespers, and came over against Lancelot. They bowed their heads to him and he saluted them, and then asked of them what place was this? And they told him that the place there was Avalon. They make stable his horse. He left his arms without the chapel and entereth therein, and saith that never hath he seen none so fair nor so rich. There were within three other places, right fair and seemly dight of rich cloths of silk and rich corners and fringes of gold. He seeth the images and the crucifixes all newly fashioned, and the chapel

The two illumined of rich colours; and moreover in the coffins midst thereof were two coffins, one against the other, and at the four corners four tall wax tapers burning, that were right rich, in four right rich candlesticks. The coffins were covered with two palls, and there were clerks that chanted psalms in turn on the one side and the other. 'Sir,' saith Lancelot to one of the hermits, 'For whom were these coffins made?' 'For King Arthur and Queen Guinievere,' 'King Arthur is not yet dead,' saith Lancelot. 'No, in truth, please God! but the body of the Queen lieth in the coffin before us, and in the other is the head of her son, until such time as the King shall be ended, to whom God grant long life! But the Queen bade at her death that his body should be set beside her own when he shall end. Hereof have we the letters and her seal in this chapel, and this place made she be builded new on this wise ever she died.'

## XII

When Lancelot heareth that it is the Queen that lieth in the coffin, he is so straitened in his heart and in his speech that never a word may he say. But no semblant of grief durst he make other than such as might not be perceived and right great comfort to him was it that there was an image of Our Lady at the head of the coffin. He knelt down the nighest he might to the coffin, as it had been to worship the image, and set his face and his mouth to the stone of the coffin, and sorroweth for her right

sweetly. 'Ha, Lady,' saith he, 'But that I dread the blame of the people, never again would I seek to depart from this place, but here would I save my soul and pray for yours; so would it be much recomforting to me that I should be so nigh, and should see the sepulchre wherein your body lieth that had so great sweetness and bounty. God, grant me of your pleasure, that at my death I may still be a-nigh, and that I may die in such manner and in such place as that I may be shrouded and buried in this holy chapel where this body lieth.' The night cometh on. A clerk cometh to the hermits and saith, 'Never yet did no knight cry mercy of God so sweetly, nor of His sweet Mother, as did this knight that is in the chapel.' And the hermits make answer that knights for the most part do well believe in God. They come to the chapel for him and bid him come hence, for that meat is ready and he should come to eat, and after that go to sleep and rest, for it is full time so to do. He telleth them that as for his eating this day it is stark nought, for a desire and a will hath taken him to keep vigil in the chapel before one of the images of Our Lady. No wish had he once to depart hence before the day, and he would fain that the night should last far longer than it did. The good men durst not force him against his will; they say, rather, that the worshipful man is of good life who will keep watch in such manner throughout the night without drink or meat, for all that he seemeth to be right weary.

Lancelot  
his vigil

Lancelot  
and Kay

## XIII

Lancelot was in the chapel until the morrow before the tomb. The hermits apparelled them to do the service that they chanted each day, mass for the soul of the Queen and her son. Lancelot heareth them with right good will. When the masses were sung, he taketh leave of the hermits and looketh at the coffin right tenderly. He commendeth the body that lieth therein to God and His sweet Mother; then findeth he without the chapel his horse accoutred ready, and mounteth forthwith, and departeth, and looketh at the place and the chapel so long as he may see them. He hath ridden so far that he is come nigh Cardoil, and findeth the land wasted and desolate, and the towns burnt, whereof is he sore grieved. He meeteth a knight that came from that part, and he was wounded full sore. Lancelot asketh him whence he cometh, and he saith, 'Sir, from towards Cardoil. Kay the Seneschal, with two other knights, is leading away Messire Ywain li Aoutres toward the castle of the Hard Rock. I thought to help to rescue him, but they have wounded me in such sort as you see.' 'Are they ever so far away?' saith Lancelot. 'Sir, they will pass just now at the head of this forest; and so you are fain to go thither, I will return with you right willingly and help you to the best I may.' Lancelot smiteth his horse with the spurs forthwith, and the knight after him, and espieth Kay the Seneschal, that was bringing Messire Ywain along at a great pace, and

had set him upon a trotting hackney, for so he thought that none would know him. Lancelot overtaketh him and crieth, 'By my head, Kay the Seneschal, shame had you enough of that you did to King Arthur when you slew his son, and as much more ought you now to have of thus warring upon him again!' He smiteth his horse of his spurs, lance in rest, and Kay the Seneschal turneth toward him, and they mell together with their spears on their shields, and pierce them in such sort that an ells-length of each shaft passeth through beyond.

## XIV

The lances were strong so as that they brast not. They draw them back to themselves so stoutly and come together so fiercely that their horses stagger and they lose the stirrups. Lancelot catcheth Kay the Seneschal at the passing beyond, in the midst of the breast, and thrusteth his spear into him so far that the point remained in the flesh, and Kay to-brast his own; and sore grieved was he when he felt himself wounded. The knight that was wounded overthrew one of the two knights. Kay is on the ground, and Lancelot taketh his horse and setteth Messire Ywain li Aoutres thereupon, that was right sore wounded so as that he scarce might bear it. Kay the Seneschal maketh his knight remount, and holdeth his sword grasped in his fist as though he had been stark wood. Lancelot seeth the two knights sore badly wounded, and thinketh that and he stay longer

**Kay** and they may remain on the field. He maketh **Briant** them go before him, and Kay the Seneschal followeth them behind, himself the third knight, that is right wroth of the wound he feeleth and the blood that he seeth. Lancelot bringeth off his knights like as the wild-boar goeth among the dogs, and Kay dealeth him great buffets of his sword when he may catch him, and Lancelot him again, and so they depart, fencing in such sort.

## XV

When Kay the Seneschal seeth that he may not harm him, he turneth him back, full of great wrath, and his heart pricketh to avenge him thereof and he may get at him, for he is the knight of the court that most he hateth. He is come back to the Castle of the Hard Rock. Briant of the Isles asketh him who hath wounded him in such sort, and he telleth him that he was bringing thither Ywain li Aoutres when Lancelot rescued him. 'And the King,' saith Briant, 'Is he repaired thither?' 'I have heard no tidings of him at all,' saith Kay, 'For no leisure had I to ask of any.' Briant and his knights take much thought as concerning Lancelot's coming, for they are well persuaded that Lancelot hath come for that the King is dead and Messire Gawain, whereof they make right great joy. Kay the Seneschal maketh him be disarmed and his wound searched. They tell him he need not fear it shall be his death, but that he is right sore wounded.

## XVI

Lancelot  
at Cardoil

Lancelot is entered into the castle of Cardoil, and his wounded knights withal, and findeth the folk in sore dismay. Great dole make they in many places and much lamentation for King Arthur, and say that now nevermore may they look for succour to none, and he be dead and Messire Gawain. But they give Lancelot joy of that he hath rescued Messire Ywain li Aoutres, and were so somewhat comforted and made great cheer. The tidings thereof came to the knights that were in the castle, and they all come forward to meet him save they that were wounded, and so led him up to the castle, and Messire Ywain with him and the other knight that was wounded. All the knights of the castle were right glad, and ask him tidings of King Arthur, and whether he were dead or no. And Lancelot telleth them that he was departed from him at the Palace Meadow, where he won the white destrier and the crown of gold there where the tidings were brought to him that Queen Guinievere was dead.

## XVII

‘Then you tell us of a truth that the King is on live, and Messire Gawain?’ ‘Both, you may be certain!’ saith Lancelot. Thereupon were they gladder than before. They told him of their own mischance, how Briant of the Isles had put them to the worse, and how Kay the Seneschal was with him to do them hurt. For he it is that taketh most pains to do them evil. ‘By

**Meliant** my head,' saith Lancelot, 'Kay the Seneschal ought of right to take heed and with-hold him from doing you ill, but he departed from the field with the point of my spear in him when I rescued Messire Ywain.'

## XVIII

The knights are much comforted of the coming of Lancelot, but he is much grieved that he findeth so many of them wounded. Meliant of the Waste Manor is at the castle of the Hard Rock, and good fellow is it betwixt him and Kay the Seneschal. He is right glad of the tidings he hath heard, that Lancelot is come, and saith that he is the knight of the world that most he hateth, and that he will avenge him of his father and he may meet him. There come before the castle of Cardoil one day threescore knights armed, and they seize upon their booty betwixt the castle and the forest. Lancelot issueth forth, all armed, and seven of the best of the castle with him. He cometh upon them after that they have led away their plunder. He overtaketh one knight and smiteth him with his spear right through the body, and the other knights make an onset upon the others and many to-brake their spears, and much clashing was there of steel on armour; and there fell at the assembly on one side and the other full a score knights, whereof some were wounded right sore. Meliant of the Waste Manor espied Lancelot, and right great joy made he of seeing him, and smiteth him so stout a buffet on the shield that he to-breaketh his spear.



## XIX

fighteth  
Lancelot

Lancelot smiteth him amidst the breast so firmly that he maketh him bend backwards over the saddle behind, and so beareth him to the ground, legs uppermost, over his horse croup, and trampleth him under his horse's feet. Lancelot was minded to alight to the ground to take him, but Briant of the Isles cometh and maketh him mount again perforce. The numbers grew on the one side and the other knights that came from Cardoil and from the Hard Rock. Right great was the frushing of lances and the clashing of swords and the overthrow of horses and knights. Briant of the Isles and Lancelot come against each other so stoutly that they pierce their shields and cleave their habergeons, and they thrust with their spears so that the flesh is broken under the ribs and the shafts are all-to-splintered. They tattle against each other so grimly at the by-passing that their eyes sparkle as it were of stars on their heads, and the horses stagger under them. They hold their swords drawn, and so turn the one toward the other like lions. Each buffets deal they upon their helms that they beat them in and make the fire leap out by the force of the smiting of iron by steel. And the knight cometh all armed toward Lancelot to slay Briant of the Isles, but Lucan the Butler cometh to meet him, and smiteth him with his spear so stoutly that he thrusteth it right through his shield and twisteth his arm against his side. He breaketh his spear at the by-passing, and



**Briant** Meliant also breaketh his, but he was wound  
and passing sore.  
**Lancelot**

## XX

Thereupon he seizeth him by the bridle : thinketh to lead him away, but the knights : the force of Briant rescue him. The clash of arms lasted great space betwixt Briant of Isles and Lancelot, and each was mightily w for that each was wounded. Either sei other many times by the bridle, and each right fain to lead the other to his own hold, the force of knights on the one side and other disparted them asunder. Thus the st lasted until evening, until that the night sunde them. But Briant had nought to boast of departing, for Lancelot and his men carried four of his by force right sore wound besides them that remained dead on the fi Briant of the Isles and Meliant betook t back all sorrowful for their knights that taken and dead. Lancelot cometh back Cardoil, and they of the castle make him ri great joy of the knights that they bring tak and say that the coming of the good kni Lancelot should be great comfort to them u such time as King Arthur should repair b and Messire Gawain. The wounded kni that were in the castle turned to healing of t wounds, whereof was Lancelot right g They were as many as five and thirty wi the castle. Of all the King's knights v there no more save Lancelot and the woun knight that he brought along with him.

## BRANCH XXV

### TITLE I

HERE the story is silent of Lancelot and Arthur  
the knights that are at Cardoile, and saith and  
King Arthur and Messire Gawain are in Gawain  
castle where the priest told Messire Gawain  
he was born. But they cannot depart  
ce at their will, for Ahuret the Bastard that  
brother of Nabigant of the Rock, that  
sire Gawain slew on account of Meliot of  
res, knoweth well that they are therewithin,  
hath assembled his knights and holdeth  
within so strait that they may not depart  
out sore damage. For he hath on the  
side a full great plenty of knights, and the  
; and Messire Gawain have with them but  
five of the forest and the country that are  
their side, and they hold them so strait  
n that they may not issue out from thence ;  
the brother of Nabigant sweareth that they  
not depart thence until such time as he  
have taken Messire Gawain, and taken  
ance on his fellow of his brother whom  
ew. The King saith to Messire Gawain  
he hath much shame of this that they are  
ng shut up therewithin, and that he better  
1 to die with honour than to live with  
e within the castle. So they issued forth,  
3 in rest, and Ahuret and his knights,

Ahuret whereof was there great plenty, made much of  
 the thereat.  
 Bastard

## II

The King and Messire Gawain strike among them, and each overthroweth his man; but Ahuret hath great shame of this that he seeth his knights put to the worse by so few folk. He setteth his spear in rest and smiteth one of King Arthur's knights through the body and beareth him down dead. Then returneth he to Messire Gawain, and buffeteth him so strongly that he pierceth his shield, but he maketh drop his own spear and loseth his stirrups, and Messire Gawain waxeth wroth and smiteth him so grimly and with such force that he maketh him bend back over the hinder bow of his saddle. But Ahuret was strong and of great might, and leapeth back between the bows and cometh toward King Arthur that he saw before him, but he knew him not. He left Messire Gawain, and the King smiteth him with such sweep that he cutteth off his arm, spear and all. There was great force of knights, so that they ran upon them on all sides; and never would they have departed thence sound and whole, but that thereupon Meliot of Logres cometh thither with fifteen knights, for that he had heard tidings of Messire Gawain, how he was besieged in a castle there, where he and King Arthur between them were in such plight that they had lost their five knights, so that there were not but only two that defended themselves as best they might, as they that had no thought

t to remain there, for the odds of two knights **Meliot**  
ainst thirty was too great. **of Logres**

## III

Thereupon, behold you, Meliot of Logres  
th fifteen knights, and they come thither  
here the King and Messire Gawain are in  
ch jeopardy, and they strike so stoutly among  
em that they rescue King Arthur and Messire  
awain from them that had taken them by the  
idle, and so slay full as many as ten of them,  
d put the others to flight, and lead away their  
rd sore maimed. And Messire Gawain  
veth Meliot much thanks of the bounty he  
th done, whereby he hath saved them their  
es; and he giveth him the castle, and is fain  
at he hold it of him, for in no place might he  
ive better employment, and that well hath he  
served it of his service in such need. Meliot  
anketh him much, and prayeth Messire  
awain instantly that and he shall have need  
succour he will come to aid him, in like  
anner as he would do by him everywhere.  
nd Messire Gawain telleth him that as of this  
edeth him not to make prayer, for that he is  
e of the knights of the world that most he  
ght of right to love. The King and Messire  
awain take leave of Meliot, and so depart,  
d Meliot garnisheth the castle that was right  
ir and rich and well-seated.

## BRANCH XXVI

### TITLE I

**Arthur at Avalon** **O**F Meliot the story is here silent, and that King Arthur and Messire Gauvain have ridden so far that they are come into the Isle of Avalon, there where the Queen lieth. They lodge the night with the hermits, and make them right great cheer. But you may well say that the King is no whit joyful when he seeth the coffin where the Queen lieth in that wherein the head of his son lieth. The King of is his dole renewed, and he saith that the holy place of this holy chapel ought he of right to love better than all other places on earth. They depart on the morrow when they have heard mass. The King goeth the quickest way he may toward Cardoil, and findeth the land wasted and desolate in many places, wherewith he is right sorrowful, and understandeth that the Seneschal warreth upon him with the other knights. He marvelleth much how he durst do it. When he is come to Cardoil. When they of the castle know it they come to meet him with right great cheer. The tidings went throughout all the land, and they of the country were right joyful thereof, for the more part believed that he was dead. They of the castle of the Hard Roke knew it, but little rejoiced they thereat. When Kay the Seneschal was whole of his wound :

thought him that great folly would he do to  
 main longer there to war upon the King, for  
 ll knew he that and the King held him and  
 that which he had proclaimed, his end  
 re come. He departeth from the castle,  
 ere he had sojourned of a long while, and  
 essed again stealthily over-sea, and came into  
 tle Britain, and made fast a castle for fear of  
 King, that is called Chinon, and was there  
 g time, without the King warring upon him,  
 enough adventures had he in other parts.

Arthur at  
 Cardoil

King come

## II

To Cardoil was the King repaired and  
 Messire Gawain. You may well understand  
 t the land was much rejoiced thereof, and  
 t all the knights were greatly comforted,  
 l knights came back to the court from all  
 ts. They that had been wounded were  
 ole again. Briant of the Isles stinted not  
 his pride nor of his outrage, but rather  
 red up the war the most he might, he and  
 liant still more, and said that never would  
 cease therefrom until death, nor never would  
 have rest until such time as he should have  
 geance of Lancelot. The King was one  
 at Cardoil at meat, and there was in the  
 l great throng of knights, and Messire  
 wain sate beside the King. Lancelot sate  
 he table, and Messire Ywain the son of King  
 ien, and Sagramors li Desirous, and Ywain li  
 utres, and many more other knights round  
 ut the table, but there were not so many as  
 re wont to be. Messire Lucan the Butler

**Madeglant of Oriande** served before the King of the golden  
 The King looked round about the table  
 remembered him of the Queen. He was  
 upon thinking rather than on eating, and  
 that his court was much wasted and worn  
 of her death. And what time the King  
 musing in such sort, behold you a knight  
 into the hall all armed before the King;  
 he leaneth on the staff of his spear. 'I  
 saith the knight, 'Listen, so please you, to  
 and all these others, listen! Madeglant  
 Oriande sendeth me here to you, and  
 mandeth that you yield up the Table Round  
 to him, for sith that the Queen is dead,  
 have no right thereof, for he is her next of  
 and he that hath the best right to have an  
 hold it; and, so you do not this, you he de  
 as the man that disheriteth him, for he is  
 enemy in two manner of ways, for the T  
 Round that you hold by wrong, and for  
 New Law that you hold. But he sendeth  
 word by me, that so you will renounce  
 belief and take Queen Jandree his sister,  
 he will cry you quit as of the Table Round  
 and will be of your aid everywhere. But  
 if you do not this, have never affiance in  
 And so sendeth he word to you by me!'

*the New  
Law*

### XII

Therewith the knight departeth, and  
 King remaineth all heavy in thought, and  
 they had eaten, he rose from the tables at  
 the knights. He speaketh to Messire Ga  
 and Lancelot, and taketh counsel with al



ers. 'Sir,' saith Messire Gawain, 'You **Of King**  
 defend yourself the best you may, and we **Arthur**  
 help you to smite your enemies. Great  
 Britain is all at your will. You have not as  
 lost any castle. Nought hath been broken  
 down nor burnt but open ground and cottages  
 and houses, whereof is no great harm done to  
 myself, and the shame thereof may lightly be  
 amended. King Madeglant is of great hardi-  
 ness as of words, but in arms will he not  
 requish you so soon. If that he warreth upon  
 us toward the West, send thither one of the  
 best knights of your court that may maintain  
 the war and defend the land against him.'

## IV

The King sojourned at Cardoil of a long  
 space. He believed in God and His sweet  
 Mother right well. He brought thither from  
 the castle where the Graal was the pattern  
 whereby chalices should be made, and com-  
 manded make them throughout all the land so  
 that the Saviour of the world should be  
 loved more worshipfully. He commanded  
 that bells be cast throughout his land  
 after the fashion of the one he had brought,  
 that each church should have one according  
 to the means thereof. This much pleased the  
 people of his kingdom, for thereby was the  
 land somewhat amended. The tidings came to  
 the King one day that Briant and Meliant were  
 passing through his land with great routs of folk,  
 and were minded to assiege Pannenoisance;  
 the King issued forth of Cardoil with great

**Meliant** throng of knights all armed, and rode until he  
**and** espied Briant and his people, and Briant his  
**Lancelot** again. They ranged their battles on both  
sides, and came together with such might and  
so great a shock as that it seemed the earth  
shook; and they melled together at the  
assembly with their spears so passing grimly  
as that the frushing thereof might be heard  
right far away. Some fourteen fell in the  
assembly that rose up again never more.  
Meliant of the Waste Manor searcheth for  
Lancelot in the midst of the stour until he  
findeth him, and runneth upon him right  
sturdily and pierceth his shield with his spear.  
Lancelot smiteth him such a sweep amidst the  
breast, that he thrusteth his spear right through  
his shoulder, and pinneth him so strongly that  
the shaft is all to-brast, and the end thereof  
remaineth in his body. And Meliant, being  
stricken through as he is, runneth upon him  
and passeth his spear right through the shield  
and through the arm, in such sort that he  
pinneth it to his side. He passeth beyond and  
breaketh his spear, and afterward returneth to  
Lancelot, sword in fist, and dealeth him a  
buffet on the helm so grimly that he all to  
battered it in. Lancelot waxeth right wroth  
thereof, and he grieveth the more for that he  
feeleth him wounded. He cometh toward  
Meliant, sword drawn, and holding him under  
under cover of his shield and cover of his helm  
and smiteth Meliant so fiercely that he cleaves  
his shoulder down to the rib in such sort that  
the end of the spear wherewith he had pierced

him fell out therefrom. Meliant felt himself Briant wounded to the death, and draweth him back sore hurt all sorrowful, and other knights run upon Lancelot and deliver assault. Messire Ywain and Sagramors li Desirous and Messire Gawain were on the other side in great jeopardy, for the people of Briant of the Isles came from all parts, and waxed more and more, and on all sides the greater number of knights had the upper hand therein. King Arthur and Briant of the Isles were in the midst of the battle, and dealt each other right great buffets. Briant's people come thither and take King Arthur by the bridle, and the King defendeth himself as a good knight, and maketh a ring about him amongst them that attack him, the same as doth a wild boar amongst the dogs. Messire Ywain is come thither and Lucan the butler, and break through the press by force. Whereupon, behold you Sagramors li Desirous, that cometh as fast as his horse may gallop under him, and smiteth Briant of the Isles right before his people with such a rush that he beareth him to the ground in a heap, both him and his horse. Briant to-brast his thigh bone at the fall that he made. Sagramors holdeth sword drawn and would fain have thrust it into his body, when the King crieth to him that he slay him not.

## V

Briant's people were not able to succour their lord. Nay, rather, they drew back on all sides, for the stour had lasted of a long space. So

**Meliant** they tended the dead and the wounded  
**dieth** whom were enough on one side and the other.  
 King Arthur made carry Briant of the  
 to Cardoil, and bring along the other knights  
 that his own knights had taken. Right joy  
 were the folks at Cardoil when the King  
 back. They bore Meliant of the Waste  
 on his shield to the Hard Rock, but he  
 lived after. The King made Briant of  
 Isles be healed, and held him in prison of a  
 while, until Briant gave him surety of all  
 lands and became his man. The King  
 him Seneschal of all his lands, and Briant  
 him right well.

## VI

Lancelot was whole of his wound, and all  
 knights of theirs. King Arthur was  
 established, and redoubted and dreaded  
 lands and of his own land like as he went to  
 Briant (hath forgotten all that is past, and  
 obedient to the King's commands, and  
 privy is he of his counsel than ever another  
 the knights, insomuch that he put the  
 somewhat back, whereof had they much  
 liking. The felony of Kay the Seneschal  
 very nigh the King's heart, and he said  
 and any would take vengeance upon him for  
 same, greatly would he love him thereof, for  
 disloyally hath he wrought against him that  
 durst not let the matter be slurred over ;  
 sore misfortune is it for the world when  
 of so poor estate hath slain so high a man  
 son for no misdeed, and that strangers ought

good right as they that knew him or himself Queen  
ke vengeance upon him thereof, so that others Jandree  
ight be adread of doing such disloyalty.

## VII

Briant was feared and redoubted throughout  
Great Britain. King Arthur had told them  
at they were all to be at his commandment.  
And one day while the King was at Cardoil,  
hold you! a damsel that cometh into the hall  
d saith to him: 'Sir, Queen Jandree hath  
nt me over to you, and biddeth you do that  
hereof her brother sent you word by his  
ight. She is minded to be Lady and Queen  
your land, and that you take her to wife, for  
high lineage is she and of great power, where-  
re she biddeth you by me that you renounce  
e New Law and that you believe in the God  
whom she believeth, and, so you do not this,  
ou may not have affiance in your land, for  
King Madeglant hath as now made ready his  
est to enter into the chief of your land, and  
ath sworn his oath that he will not end until  
e shall have passed all the borders of the isles  
at march upon your land, and shall come upon  
reat Britain with all his strength, and so seize  
e Table Round that ought to be his own  
f right. And my Lady herself would come  
ither but for one thing, to wit, that she hath in  
er such disdain of them that believe in the  
ew Law, that she deigneth not behold none of  
em, for, so soon as she was stablished Queen,  
ade she her eyes be covered for that she would  
at look upon none that were of that believe.

**Jandree's message** But the Gods wherein she believeth did much for her, for that she loveth and worshippeth them, that she may discover her eyes at her face, and yet see not at all, whereof is she right glad, for that the eyes in her head are beautiful and gentle. But great affiance hath she in her brother, that is mighty and puissant, for he hath her in covenant that he will destroy all them that believe in the New Law, in all places where he may get at them, and, when he shall have destroyed them in Great Britain and the other islands, so that my Lady might not be none therein, so well is she with the Gods wherein she believeth, that she will have no sight again all whole, nor until that hour she fain to see nought.'

## VIII

'Damsel,' saith the King, 'I have heard well that which you tell me of this that you have in charge to say; but tell your Lady on my behalf, that the Law which the Saviour of the world hath established by His death and by His crucifixion never will I renounce, for the love that I have in Him. But tell her that I believe in God and in His sweet Mother, and that she believe in the New Law, for by the false believe wherein she abideth is she blind in such sort, nor never will she see clear until she believe in God. Tell her moreover, I see her word that never more shall there be Queen in my land save she be of like worth as my Queen Guenievre.' 'Then I tell you plainly saith she, 'that you will have betimes a

ings as that good for you they will not be.' of  
ie damsel departeth from Cardoil, and cometh defiance  
:k to where the Queen was, and telleth her  
message King Arthur sendeth her. 'True,'  
h she, 'I love him better than all in the  
rld, and yet refuseth he my will and my  
mandment. Now may he no longer en-  
e!' She sendeth to her brother King  
deglant, and telleth him that she herself doth  
y him and he take not vengeance on King  
:hur and bring him not into prison.

## BRANCH XXVII

### TITLE I

King  
Made-  
glant

**T**HIS history saith that the land of King was full far away from the land of King Arthur, and that needs must he pass the seas or ever he should approach the first border of King Arthur's land. He arrived in Albion with great force of men with a great navy. When they of the land knew it, they garnished them against him and defended their lands to the best they might; then they sent word to King Arthur that King Madeglant was come in such manner into the land, with great plenty of food and that he should come presently to succour them or send them a knight so good as that might protect them, and that in case he doth not so, the land will be lost. When King Arthur understood these tidings, it was not well with him. He asked his knights whom he might send thither. And they say, let him send Lancelot thither, for that he is a worthy knight and a kingly, and much understandeth of war and hath in him as much loyalty as hath ever another that they know. The King made him come before him.

### II

‘Lancelot,’ saith the King, ‘Such affairs have I in you and in your knighthood, that it



y will to send you to the furthest corner of my **Lancelot**  
 nd, to protect it, with the approval of my **goeth**  
 nights, wherefore I pray and require you that **forth**  
 ou do your power herein as many a time have  
 ou done already in my service. And I will  
 ve you in command forty knights.' 'Sir,'  
 ith Lancelot, 'Against your will am I not  
 inded to be, but in your court are there other  
 nights full as good, or better than I, whom  
 ou might well send thither. But I would not  
 at you should hold this of cowardize in me,  
 d right willingly will I do your pleasure, for  
 ne ought I to serve more willingly than you.'  
 he King giveth him much thanks of this that  
 e saith. Lancelot departeth from the court, and  
 keth forty knights with him, and so cometh  
 to the land of Albanie where King Madeglant  
 ath arrived. When they of the land knew  
 at Lancelot was come, great joy had they  
 ereof in their hearts, for oftentimes had they  
 ard tell of him and of his good knighthood.  
 hey were all at his commandment, and received  
 im as their champion and protector.

## III

King Madeglant one day issued forth of his  
 ips to do battle against Lancelot and them of  
 e land. Lancelot received him right stoutly,  
 d slew many of his folk, and the more part  
 ed and would fain have drawn them to their  
 ips, but Lancelot and his people went after  
 d cut a part of them to pieces. King  
 ladeglant, with as many of his men as he  
 ight, betaketh himself to his own ship privily,

**Made-** and maketh put to sea the soonest he may.  
**glant** They that might not come to the ships remained  
**is de-** on dry land, and were so cut up and slain.  
**feated** Madeglant went his way discomfited. Of ten  
ships full of men that he had brought he took  
back with him but two. The land was in peace  
and assured in safety. Lancelot remained there  
of a long space. They of the country loved  
him much and gave themselves great joy of  
his valour and his great bounty, insomuch that  
most of them say oftentimes that they would fain  
have such a knight as was he for king, by the  
goodwill of King Arthur, for that the land is  
too far away; but and if he would set there  
a knight or other man that might protect the  
land, they would take it in right good part, and  
he should hold the land of him, for they might  
not safeguard it at their will without a champion  
for that land without a lord may but little avail.  
They of the land loved Lancelot well, as I tell  
you. King Arthur was at Cardoill, and so were  
his knights together with him. He thought to  
be assured in his kingdom and to live peaceably  
but what time he sate at meat one day at  
Cardoill, behold you thereupon a knight that  
cometh before the Table Round without saluting  
him. 'Sir,' saith he, 'Where is Lancelot?'  
'Sir,' saith the King to the knight, 'He is not  
in this country.' 'By my head,' saith the  
knight, 'that misliketh me. Wheresoever I  
be, he is your knight and of your household  
wherefore King Claudas sendeth you word that  
he is his mortal enemy, and you also, if I  
be that for love of him you receive him from

his day forward, for he hath slain his sister's Claudas  
on, Meliant of the Waste Manor, and he slew defieth  
the father of Meliant likewise, but the father Arthur  
elongeth not to King Claudas.

## IV

'Meliant was the son of his sister-german,  
wherefore much grieveth he of his death.'  
Sir knight,' saith the King, 'I know not  
how the covenant may be between them as of  
his that you tell me, but well know I that  
King Claudas holdeth many a castle that King  
Claudas ought not of right to have, whereof he  
inherited his father, but meet is it that each  
should conquer his own right. But so much I  
tell you plainly, that never will I fail mine own  
right and he be such as durst defend himself  
of murder, but and if he hath no will to do  
his, then well may I allow that right be done  
pon him. But, sith that he will not love his  
own death, neither I nor other ought greatly to  
love him and he refuse to redress his wrong.  
When Lancelot shall know these tidings, I  
know well that such is his valour and his  
loyalty that he will readily answer in reason,  
and will do all that he ought to do to clear  
himself of such a charge.' 'Sir,' saith the  
knight, 'You have heard well that I have told  
you. Once more, I tell you plainly, King  
Claudas sendeth you word that so you harbour  
his enemy henceforward and in such manner as  
you have done heretofore, he will be less than  
pleased with you.'

A  
council  
of  
knights

V

With that the knight departeth, and the King remaineth at Cardoil. He sendeth for Briant of the Isles, his seneschal, and a great part of his knights, and demandeth counsel of them what he may do. Messire Ywain saith that he killed Meliant in the King's service, as one that warred upon his land, albeit the King had done him no wrong, and had so made common cause with the King's enemies without demanding right in his court. Nor never had Meliant appealed Lancelot of murder nor of treason, nor required him of the death of his father. Rather, Lancelot slew him in open war, as one that warred upon his lord by wrong. Sir,' saith Messire Ywain to the King, 'Howsoever Lancelot might have wrought in respect of Meliant, your land ought not to be called to account, for you were not in the kingdom, nor knew not that either had done other any wrong, and therefore say I that King Claudas will do great wrong and he bring plaint or levy war against you on this account.' 'Messire Ywain,' saith Briant of the Isles, 'matter of common knowledge is it that Lancelot slew the lord of the Waste Manor and Meliant his son after the contention that was betwixt King Arthur and me. But, after that he had slain the father, he ought of right to have taken good heed that he did no wrong to the son, but rather ought he to have sought peace and accord.'

## VI

Wrathful  
debate

‘Briant,’ saith Messire Gawain, ‘Lancelot not here; and, moreover, he is now on the King’s business. Well know you that Meliant came to you and that you made him knight, and that thereafter he warred upon the King’s land without reasonable occasion. The King was far away from the land as he that made pilgrimage to the Graal. He was told tidings that his land was being put to the worse, and he sent Lancelot to protect it. He accordingly maintained the war as best he might until such time as the King was returned. Meliant knew well that the King was come back, and that never had he done wrong to none in his court that wished to demand right therein. He neither came thither nor sent, either to do right or to demand right, whether he did so or despite or whether it was for that he knew not how to do it. In the meanwhile he warred upon the King, that had never done him a wrong nor refused to do him a right. Lancelot saw him in the King’s war and upon his land in defence thereof. There was peace of the war, as was agreed on between you and the King, but and if any should therefore hold Lancelot to blame of the death of Meliant, it seemeth that therein is he wrong. For the others are not held to answer for them that they slew; but and if you wish to say that Lancelot hath not slain him with reason, however he may have wrought aforetime in respect of his father, I am ready to maintain is right by my body on behalf of his.’

Briant's  
craven  
counsel

## VII

‘Messire Gawain,’ saith Briant of the Isles  
‘You will not as at this time find none that  
will take up your gage on account of this affair  
nor ought any to make enemies of his friends  
nor ought you to counsel me so to do. King  
Madeglant warreth upon him and King Claudas  
maketh war upon him also. They will deliver  
attacks enough. But I should well allow, for  
the sake of saving his land and keeping his  
friends, that the King should suffer Lancelot to  
remain at a distance from his court for one  
year, until tidings should have come to King  
Claudas that he had been bidden leave thereof  
so as that King Arthur might have his good  
will and his love.’ Sagramors li Desirous  
leapeth forward. ‘Briant of the Isles,’ saith  
Sagramors, ‘Ill befall him that shall give such  
counsel to a lord of his knight, and the knight  
have well served his lord, albeit he may have  
slain in his wars a knight without murder and  
without treason, that he should give him his  
leave! Right ill will Lancelot hitherto have  
bestowed his services, and the King on this  
account give him his leave! After that, let  
King Claudas come! Let him lay waste and  
slay, and right great worship shall King Arthur  
have thereof! I say not this for that Lancelot  
hath need be afear’d of King Claudas body or  
body, nor of the best knight in his land, but  
many things befall whereof one taketh no heed,  
and so King Arthur give leave to Lancelot  
from his court, it will be counted unto him for

owardize, and neither I nor you nor other night ought never more to have affiance in im.' 'Lord,' saith Briant of the Isles, Better would it avail the King to give Lancelot leave for one year, than it would to ght for him ten years and have his land wasted and put to the worse.' Angry words

## VIII

Thereupon, behold you! Orgueilleux of the Launde come, that had not been at the court of long time, and it had been told him whereof these words were. 'Briant,' saith Orgueilleux of the Launde, 'Evil fare the knight that would sin grieve and harm with their lord them that have served him well! Sith that Lancelot is not here, say nought of him that ought not to be said. The court of King Arthur hath been as much renowned and made honoured by Lancelot as by ever another knight that is in it, and, but for him, never would his court have been so redoubted as it is. For no knight is there so cruel to his foes nor so redoubted throughout all Great Britain as is Lancelot, and, for that King Arthur loveth you, make him not that he hate his knights, for such four or such six be there in his castle as may depart therefrom without turning, the loss whereof should scarce be made good by us. Lancelot hath well served the King aforetime, and the King well knoweth how much he is worth; and if so be that King Laudas purposeth to war on King Arthur for Lancelot's sake, according as I have heard,

**Orguel-** without any reason, and King Arthur be  
**leux his** more craven than he wont to be, he may w  
**counsel** abide his warfare and his strife so treason ha  
him not. For so many good knights hath K  
Arthur yet, that none knoweth such knig  
nor such King in the world beside.'



## BRANCH XXVIII

### TITLE I

**T**HIS story saith that Briant would have been **Lancelot** wroth with a will against Orgueilleux of **returneth** the Launde, had it not been for the King, and Orgueilleux against him, for Orgueilleux heeded no danger when anger and ill-will carried him away. Therewithal the talk came to an end. When the King learnt the tidings that Madeglant was discomfited and that the land of Albanie was in peace, he sent word to Lancelot to return back. They of the land were very sorrowful when he departed, for great affiance had they in his chivalry. So he came back thither where King Arthur was. All they of the land made great joy, for well loved was he of many, nor were there none that hated him save of envy alone. They told him the tidings of King Claudas, and also in what manner Briant had spoken. Lancelot took no notice outwardly, as he that well knew how to redress all his grievances. He was at the court of a long while, for that King Claudas was about to send over thither some one of his knights. Briant of the Isles would fain that the King should have given him his leave, for more he hated him than ever another knight in the court, sith he it was that many a time had harmed him more than any other. By Briant's counsel, King Claudas sent

**Briant is** his knight to King Arthur's court, wherein did  
**defeated** he not wisely, for that he thereby renewed  
a matter whereof afterward came right great  
mischief, as this title witnesseth.

## II

Madeglant of Oriande heard say that Lancelot was repaired back, and that the land of Albany was all void save for the folk of the country. He maketh ready his navy at once and comes back to the land in great force. He burneth the land and layeth it waste on every side, and doth far worse therein than he did aforetime. They of the land sent over to King Arthur and told him of their evil plight, warning him that and he send them not succour betimes, they will leave the land and yield up the castles, for that they might not hold them longer. He took counsel, the King with his knights, whom he might send thither, and they said that Lancelot had already been there and that now another knight should be sent thither. The King sent thither Briant of the Isles, and lent him forty knights. Briant, that loved not the King in his heart, came into the land, but only made pretence of helping him to defend it. One day fell out battle betwixt Madeglant and Briant and all the men. Briant was discomfited, and had many of his knights killed. Madeglant and his people spread themselves over the land and laid the towns in ruins and destroyed the castles, the were disgarnished, and put to death all the that would not believe in their gods, and cut off their heads.

## III

A golden  
quarrel

All they of the land and country longed with sorrow for Lancelot, and said that had he remained there, the land would not have been thus destroyed, nor might they never have protection of no knight but of him alone. Briant of the Isles returned back, as he that would the war against King Arthur should increase on every side, for, what good soever the King may do him, he loveth him not, nor never will so long as he is on live. But no semblant thereof durst he show, for, sith that the best of his knights had been slain in the battle, so had he no power on his side, as against Lancelot and the good knights of his fellowship, whereof he would fain that there had been not one.

## IV

King Arthur was at Cardoil on one day of Whitsuntide. Many were the knights that were come to this court whereof I tell you. The King was seated at meat, and the day was fair and clear, and the air clean and fresh. Gramours li Desirous and Lucan the Butler served before the King. And what time they had served of the first meats, therewithal behold you, a quarrel, like as it had been shot from a cross-bow, and striketh in the column of the hall before the King so passing strong that there was not a knight in the hall but heard it when it struck therein. They all looked thereat in great wonderment. The quarrel was like as were of gold, and it had about it a many costly

**A** precious stones. The King saith that quarrel  
**damsel's** so costly cometh not from a poor place.  
**request** Lancelot and Messire Gawain say that never  
have they seen one so rich. It struck so deep  
in the column that the iron point thereof might  
not be seen, and a good part of the shaft was  
also hidden. Thereupon, behold you, a damsel  
of surpassing great beauty that cometh, sitting on  
a right costly mule, full well caparisoned. She  
had a gilded bridle and gilded saddle, and was  
clad in a right rich cloth of silk. A squire  
followed after her that drove her mule from  
behind. She came before King Arthur as  
straight as she might, and saluted him right  
worshipfully, and he made answer the best he  
might. 'Sir,' saith she, 'I am come to speak  
and demand a boon, nor will I never alight  
until such time as you shall have granted it to  
me. For such is my custom, and for this am  
I come to your court, whereof I have heard  
such tidings and such witness in many places  
where I have been, that I know you will not  
deny me herein.'

## V

'Damsel, tell me what boon you would have  
of me?' 'Sir,' saith she, 'I would fain pray  
and beseech you that you bid the knight that  
may draw forth this quarrel from this column  
go thither where there is sore need of him.'  
'Damsel,' saith the King, 'Tell me the need.'  
'Sir,' saith she, 'I will tell it you plainly when  
I shall see the knight that shall have drawn it  
forth.' 'Damsel,' saith the King, 'Alight'

Never, please God, shall you go forth of my court denied of that you ask.' Lucan the Butler taketh her between his arms and setteth her to the ground, and her mule is led away to be stabled. When the damsel had washen, she was set in a seat beside Messire Ywain, that showed her much honour and served her with good will. He looked at her from time to time, for she was fair and gentle and of good countenance. When they had eaten at the tables, the damsel prayeth the King that he will hasten them to do her business. 'Sir,' saith she, 'Many a good knight is there within wonder, and right glad may he be that shall draw it forth, for I tell you a right good knight as he, sith that none may achieve this business save he alone.' 'Fair nephew,' saith the King, 'Now set your hand to this quarrel and give it back to the damsel.' 'Ha, sir,' saith she, 'Do me not shame! By the faith that I owe you, I will not set my hand forward herein this day, nor ought you to be wroth hereof. Behold, here have you Lancelot with you, and so many other good knights, that little worship should I have herein were I to set myself forward before them.' 'Messire Ywain,' saith the King, 'Set your hand hereto! It may be that you think too humbly of yourself herein.' 'Sir,' saith Messire Ywain, 'Nought is there in the world that I would not do for you, but as for this matter I pray you hold me excused.' 'Sagramors, and you, Morguelleux of the Launde, what will you say?' saith the King. 'Sir,' say they, 'When

Lancelot hath made assay, we will do your pleasure, but before him, so please you, we will not go.'

## VI

'Damsel,' saith the King, 'Pray Lancelot that he be fain to set his hand, and then the rest shall go after him if needs be.' 'Lancelot,' saith the damsel, 'By the thing that most you love, make not mine errand bootless, but set your hand to the quarrel and then will the others do that they ought of right to do. For no leisure have I to tarry here long time.' 'Damsel,' saith Lancelot, 'Ill do you, and a sin, to conjure me for nought, for so many good knights be here within, that I should be held for a fool and a braggart and I put myself forward before all other.' 'By my head,' saith the King, 'Not so! Rather will you be held as a knight courteous and wise and good, and now you ought to be, and great worship will it be to yourself and you may draw forth the quarrel, and great courtesy will it be to aid the damsel. Wherefore I require you, of the faith you owe me, that you set your hand thereto, sith that the damsel prayeth you so to do before the others.'

## VII

Lancelot hath no mind to disobey the King's commandment; and he remembered that the damsel had conjured him by the thing that most he loved; nor was there nought in the world that he loved so much as the Queen

eit she was dead, nor never thought he of **The**  
 ie other thing save her alone. Then standeth **Chapel**  
 straight upright, doth off his robe, and cometh **Perilous**  
 ight to the quarrel that is fixed in the  
 umn. He setteth his hand thereunto and  
 weth it forth with a right passing strong  
 nch, so sturdily that he maketh the column  
 nble. Then he giveth it to the damsel.  
 r,' saith she to King Arthur, 'Now is it  
 devoir to tell you plainly of my errand;  
 might none of the knights here within have  
 wn forth the quarrel save only he; and you  
 l me in covenant how he that should draw  
 orth should do that which I shall require of  
 , and that he might do it, nor will I pray  
 require of him nought that is not reason.  
 eds must he go to the Chapel Perilous the  
 ftest he may, and there will he find a knight  
 : lieth shrouded in the midst of the chapel:  
 will take of the cloth wherein he is  
 ounded and a sword that lieth at his side in  
 coffin, and will take them to the Castle  
 ilous; and when he shall there have been,  
 shall return to the castle where he slew the  
 in the cavern wherein are the two griffons,  
 the head of one of them shall he take and  
 g to me at Castle Perilous, for a knight  
 re lieth sick that may not otherwise be  
 led.'

## VIII

Damsel,' saith Lancelot, 'I see that you  
 kon but little of my life, so only that you  
 h be accomplished.' 'Sir,' saith she, 'I

Lancelot know as well as you what the enterprise is, n  
 goeth do I no whit desire your death, for, and we  
 forth you dead, never would the knight be whole f  
 whose sake you undertake it. And you wi  
 see the fairest damsel that is in any kingdo  
 and the one that most desireth to see yo  
 And, so you tarry not, through her shall y  
 lightly get done that you have to do. S  
 now that you delay it not, but do that is need  
 swiftly sith that it hath been laid upon you, f  
 the longer you tarry, the greater will be t  
 hazard of mischance befalling you.' The dam  
 departeth from the court and taketh her lea  
 and goeth her way back as fast as she may, a  
 saith to herself: 'Lancelot, albeit you ha  
 these pains and this travail for me, yet wor  
 I not your death herein, but of right ought  
 to rejoice in your tribulation, for into two of t  
 most perilous places in the world are you goin  
 Greatly ought I to hate you, for you reft me  
 my friend and gave him to another, and wh  
 I live may I never forget it.' The dam  
 goeth her way, and Lancelot departeth fr  
 the court and taketh leave of the King and  
 all the others. He issueth forth of Cardoil,  
 armed, and entereth into the forest that is de  
 and so goeth forth a great pace, and pray  
 God guide him into safety.



## BRANCH XXIX

### TITLE I

**[**HEREWITHAL the story is silent of **Arthur**  
Lancelot, and saith that Briant of the **and**  
Isles is repaired to Cardoil. Of the forty **Briant**  
knights that he took with him, but fifteen doth  
bring back again. Thereof is King Arthur  
great sorrowful, and saith that he hath the fewer  
friends. They of the land of Albanie have  
went to King Arthur and told him that and he  
would not lose the land for evermore he must  
send them Lancelot, for never saw they knight  
that better knew how to avenge him on his  
enemies and to do them hurt than was he.  
The King asketh Briant of the Isles how it is  
that his knights are dead in such sort? 'Sir,'  
saith Briant, 'Madeglant hath great force of  
people, and what force of men soever may run  
upon them, they make a castle of their navy in  
such sort that none may endure against them,  
and never did no folk know so much of war as  
do they. The land lieth far away from you,  
and more will it cost you to hold it than it is  
worth; and, if you will believe my counsel, you  
will trouble yourself no more about it, and they  
of the country would be well counselled and  
they did the same.' 'Briant,' saith the King,  
'This would be great blame to myself. No  
worthshipful man ought to be idle in guarding

**Briant's** and holding that which is his own.  
**crafty** worshipful man ought not to hold of thing  
**hints** much for their value as for their honour, as  
 I should leave the land disgarnished of my  
 and my counsel, they will take mine, and  
 say that I have not heart to protect my land;  
 even now is it great shame to myself that  
 have settled themselves there and would  
 draw away them of the land to their evil.  
 And I would fain that Lancelot had achieved  
 that he hath undertaken, and I would have  
 him there, for none would protect the  
 better than he, and, were he now there a  
 with forty knights and with them of the court  
 Madeglant would make but short stay there.  
 'Sir,' saith Briant, 'They of the country re-  
 nought of you nor any other but Lancelot  
 and they say that and you send him there  
 will make him King.' 'It may well be  
 they say so,' saith the King, 'But never w  
 Lancelot do aught that should be against  
 will.' 'Sir,' saith Briant, 'Sith that you  
 not minded to believe me, I will say no mo  
 this matter, but in the end his knighthood  
 harm you rather than help you and you  
 no better heed thereof than up to this time  
 have done.'

## BRANCH XXX

### TITLE I

**O**F Briant of the Isles the story is here Of  
silent, whom the King believeth too much Lancelot  
in many things, and saith that Lancelot goeth  
his way right through the forest, full heavy in  
thought. He had not ridden far when he met  
a knight that was right sore wounded. He  
asked him whence he came and who had  
wounded him in such manner. 'Sir,' saith  
he, 'I come from the Chapel Perilous, where I  
was not able to defend me against an evil folk  
that appeared there; and they have wounded me  
in such sort as you see, and but for a damsel  
that came thereinto from the forest I should not  
have escaped on live. But she aided me on  
such condition that and I should see a knight they  
call Lancelot, or Perceval, or Messire Gawain,  
should tell which of them soever I should first  
meet withal that he should go to her without  
delay, for much she marvelleth her that none of  
them cometh into the chapel, for none ought to  
enter there but good knights only. But much  
do I marvel, Sir, how the damsel durst enter  
there, for it is the most marvellous place that is,  
and the damsel is of right great beauty; nathe-  
less she cometh thither oftentimes alone into  
the chapel. A knight lieth in the chapel that  
 hath been slain of late, that was a fell and cruel

**Meliot** knight and a hardy.' 'What was his name  
**lieth** saith Lancelot. 'He was named Ahure  
**sore** Bastard,' saith the knight; 'And he had  
**wounded** one arm and one hand, and the other  
 smitten off at a castle that Messire Ga  
 gave Meliot of Logres when he succoured  
 against this knight that lieth in the coffin.  
 Meliot of Logres hath slain the knight  
 had assieged the castle, but the knight wou  
 him sore, so that he may not be whole sa  
 have the sword wherewith he wounded  
 that lieth in the coffin at his side, and so  
 the cloth wherein he is enshrouded; and  
 God grant me to meet one of the kn  
 gladly will I convey to him the damsel's  
 sage.' 'Sir Knight,' saith Lancelot, 'Of  
 them have you found. My name is Lan  
 and for that I see you are wounded and in  
 plight, I tell it you thus freely.' 'Sir,'  
 the knight, 'Now may God protect your b  
 for you go in great peril of death. But  
 damsel much desireth to see you, I know  
 for what, and well may she aid you if  
 will.'

## II

'Sir Knight, God hath brought us forth  
 many a peril, and so will He also from this  
 it be His pleasure and His will.' With  
 Lancelot departeth from the knight, and  
 ridden so far that he is come at evensong to  
 Chapel Perilous, that standeth in a great w  
 of the forest, and hath a little church-yard  
 it that is well enclosed on all sides, and hat

ancient cross without the entrance. The chapel and the grave-yard are overshadowed of the forest, that is right tall. Lancelot entereth herein all armed. He signeth him of the cross and blesseth him and commendeth him to God. He seeth in the grave-yard coffins in many places, and it seemeth him that he seeth folk round about that talk together, the one with another. But he might not hear that they said. He might not see them openly, but very tall they seemed him to be. He is come toward the chapel and alighteth of his horse, and seeth shed outside the chapel, wherein was proender for horses. He goeth thither to set his own there, then leaneth his shield against his spear at the entrance of the chapel, and entereth in, where it was very dark, for no light was there save only of a single lamp that shone full brightly. He seeth the coffin that was in the midst of the chapel wherein the knight lay.

## III

When he had made his orison before an image of Our Lady, he cometh to the coffin and openeth it as fast as he may, and seeth the knight, tall (and foul of favour) that therein lay dead. The cloth wherein he was enshrouded was displayed all bloody. He taketh the sword that lay at his side and lifteth the winding-sheet to rend it at the seam, then taketh the knight by the head to lift him upward, and findeth him so heavy and so ungain that scarce may he remove him. He cutteth off the half of the cloth wherein he is enshrouded, and the

**The** coffin beginneth to make a crashing so pass-  
**Grave-** loud that it seemed the chapel were fall-  
**yard** When he hath the piece of the cloth and  
**Perilous** sword he closeth the coffin again, and forth-  
 with cometh to the door of the chapel and as-  
 cendeth the mount, in the midst of the grave-yard as  
 seemed him, great knights and horrible, as  
 they are apparelled as it were to combat, as  
 him thinketh that they are watching for him  
 and espy him.

## IV

Thereupon, behold you, a damsel running, her  
 kirtle girt high about her, right through the  
 grave-yard a great pace. 'Take heed you may  
 not until such time as it is known who the  
 knight is!' She is come to the chapel. 'O  
 Knight, lay down the sword and this that I  
 have taken of the winding-sheet of the dead  
 knight!' 'Damsel,' saith Lancelot, 'What  
 hurt doth it you of this that I have?' 'The  
 knight,' saith she, 'That you have taken it without  
 leave; for I have him in charge, both him and  
 the chapel. And I would fain,' saith she, 'I  
 know what is your name?' 'Damsel,' saith  
 she, 'What would you gain of knowing my  
 name?' 'I know not,' saith she, 'whether  
 I shall have either loss or gain thereof, but  
 my time already is it that I should ask you it to  
 my sorrow, for many a time have I been deceived  
 therein.' 'Damsel,' saith he, 'I am called  
 Lancelot of the Lake.' 'You ought of right  
 saith she, 'to have the sword and the cloth,  
 but come you with me to my castle, for our  
 fight.'

nes have I desired that you and Perceval and Lancelot  
[essire Gawain should see the three tombs] refuseth  
at I have made for your three selves.' a damsel

## V

'Damsel,' saith he, 'No wish have I to see  
y sepulchre so early betimes.' 'By my head,'  
ith she, 'And you come not thither, you may  
ot issue from hence without tribulation; and  
ey that you see there are earthly fiends that  
ard this grave-yard and are at my command-  
ent.' 'Never, damsel, please God,' saith  
ancelot, 'may your devils have power to harm  
Christian.' 'Ha, Lancelot,' saith she, 'I  
seech and pray you that you come with me  
to my castle, and I will save your life as at  
is time from this folk that are just now ready  
fall upon you; and, so you are not willing to  
this, yield me back the sword that you have  
ken from the coffin, and go your way at once.'  
Damsel,' saith Lancelot, 'Into your castle  
ay I not go, nor desire I to go, wherefore  
ay me no more thereof, for other business  
ive I to do; nor will I yield you back the  
word, whatsoever may befall me, for a certain  
ight may not otherwise be healed, and great  
ty it were that he should die.' 'Ha, Lancelot,'  
ith she, 'How hard and cruel do I find you  
wards me! And as good cause have I to be  
rry that you have the sword as have you to  
e glad. For, and you had not had it upon  
ou, never should you have carried it off from  
ence at your will; rather should I have had all  
y pleasure of you, and I would have made you

**Lancelot** be borne into my castle, from whence **benighted** should you have moved again for nought might do; and thus should I have been of the wardenship of this chapel and of com thereinto in such manner as now oftentimes needs must come.

## VI

‘But now am I taken in a trap, for, so as you have the sword, not one of them that there yonder can do you evil nor hinder of going.’ Of this was Lancelot not so. He taketh leave of the damsel, that departed grudgingly, garnisheth him again of his arms, then mounteth again on his horse and goeth way right through the grave-yard. He beholds this evil folk, that were so foul and huge hideous, it seemed as if they would devour everything. They made way for Lancelot, had no power to hurt him. He is issued from the grave-yard and goeth his way through forest until daylight appeared about him, and clear. He found the hermit there where he had heard mass, then ate a little, then departed and rode the day long until setting the sun, but could find no hold on the one nor the other wherein he might lodge, and was benighted in the forest.

## VII

Lancelot knew not which way to turn, for he had not often been in the forest, and knew not how the land lay nor the paths therein. He rode until he found a little causeway, and then



The  
Castle of  
Griffons

is a path at the side that led to an orchard that was at a corner of the forest, where there is a postern gate whereby one entered, and was not made fast for the night. And the orchard was well enclosed with walls. Lancelot entered in and made fast the entrance, then took his horse's bridle and let him feed on the grass. He might not espy the castle that was hid by for the abundance of trees and the darkness of the night, and so knew not whither he was arrived. He laid his shield for a pillow and his arms at his side and fell on sleep. But, had he known where it was he had come, little sleep would he have had, for he was close to the cavern where he slew the lion and where the griffons were, that had come in from the forest and gorged of victual, and were fallen on sleep, and it was for them that the postern gate had been left unbolted. A damsel went down from her chamber by a trap-door with a brachet on her arm for fear of the griffons, and as she went toward the postern-gate to lock it, she espied Lancelot, that lay asleep in the midst of the orchard. She ran back to her Lady the speediest she might, and said to her: 'Up, Lady!' saith she, 'Lancelot is sleeping in the orchard!' She leapt up incontinent and came to the orchard there where Lancelot was sleeping, then sate her down beside him and began to look at him, sighing the while, and draweth near him as she may. 'Fair Lord God,' saith she, 'what shall I do? and I wake him first he will have no care to kiss me, and if I kiss him sleeping he will awake forthwith; and better

Lancelot hap is it for me to take the most I may ever  
 is kissed such-wise than to fail of all, and moreover,  
 sleeping be I shall have kissed him, I may hope  
 he will not hate me thereof, sith that I  
 then boast that I have had at least so  
 of that which is his own.' She set her  
 close to him and so kissed him the best  
 fairest she might, three times, and Lancelot  
 awakened forthwith. He leapt up and  
 the cross upon him, then looked at the damsel  
 and said: 'Ha, God! where, then, am I?'  
 'Fair sweet friend,' saith she, 'You are  
 her that hath all set her heart upon you and  
 remove it never.' 'I cry you mercy, damsel,'  
 saith Lancelot, 'and I tell you, for nought  
 may befall, one that loveth me, please  
 never will I hate! but that which one  
 loved long time ought not so soon to fall  
 from the remembrance of a love that is  
 in the heart, when she hath been proven  
 and loyal, nor ought one so soon to  
 therefrom.'

## VIII

'Sir,' saith she, 'This castle is at your  
 commandment, and you will remain therein,  
 well may you know my thought towards you.  
 Would that your thought were the same towards  
 me.' 'Damsel,' saith he, 'I seek the head  
 of a knight that may not be healed save I bite  
 him the head of one of your serpents.' 'Certes,  
 Sir, so hath it been said. But I bade  
 damsel say so only for that I was fain  
 should come back hither to me.' 'Damsel,'

ith he, 'I have come back hither, and so may The  
 turn back again sith that of the serpent's head damsel  
 there no need.' 'Ha, Lancelot,' saith she, plaineth  
 How good a knight are you, and how ill default  
 you make in another way! No knight,  
 ethinketh, is there in the world that would  
 ve refused me save only you. This cometh  
 your folly, and your outrage, and your  
 seness of heart! The griffons have not done  
 y will in that they have not slain you or  
 rangled you as you slept, and, so I thought  
 at they would have power to slay you, I  
 ould make them come to slay you now. But  
 e devil hath put so much knighthood into you  
 at scarce any man may have protection against  
 ou. Better ought I to love you dead than  
 ive. By my head, I would fain that your  
 ead were hanged with the others that hang  
 the entrance of the gateway, and, had I  
 ought you would have failed me in such wise  
 would have brought my father here to where  
 ou were sleeping, and right gladly would he  
 ave slain you.

## IX

'None that knoweth the covenant between  
 e and you ought to hold you for a good  
 night; for you have cozened me of my right  
 according to the tenor and custom of the castle  
 that through perversity or slothfulness you  
 urst not take me when you have won me.'  
 Damsel,' saith Lancelot, 'You may say your  
 ill. You have done so much for me sithence  
 hat I came hither that I ought not to be afeard

Castle of you, for traitor is the man or woman that  
 Perilous kisseth another to procure his hurt.' 'Lancelot,  
 I took but that I might have, for well I see  
 that none more thereof may I have never again.'  
 He goeth to put the bridle on his destrier, and  
 then taketh leave of the damsel, that parteth  
 from him right sorrowfully; but Lancelot would  
 no longer tarry, for great throng of knights was  
 there in the castle, and he was not minded to put  
 him in jeopardy for nought. He issueth forth  
 of the orchard, and the damsel looketh after  
 him as long as she may see him. After that  
 cometh she to her chamber, sad and vexed at  
 heart, nor knoweth she how she may bear  
 herself, for the thing in the world that most she  
 loveth is far away, and no joy may she have  
 thereof.

## X

Lancelot rideth right amidst the forest until  
 it is day, and cometh at the right hour of noon  
 to the Castle Perilous, where Meliot of Logres  
 lay. He entered into the castle. The damsel  
 that was at King Arthur's court cometh to  
 meet him. 'Lancelot,' saith she, 'Welcome  
 may you be!' 'Damsel,' saith he, 'Good  
 adventure may you have!' He was alighted  
 at the mounting-stage of the hall. She maketh  
 him mount up the steps and afterward be dis-  
 armed. 'Damsel,' saith he, 'Behold, here is  
 some of the winding-sheet wherein the knight  
 was shrouded, and here is his sword; but you  
 befooled me as concerning the serpent's head.'  
 'By my head,' saith the damsel, 'that did I'

for the sake of the damsel of the Castle of Lancelot Griffons that hateth you not a whit, for so and prayed she me to do. Now hath she seen you, Meliot and so will she be more at ease, and will have no cause to ask me thereof.'

## XI

The damsel leadeth Lancelot to where Meliot of Logres lay. Lancelot sitteth him down before him and asketh how it is with him? 'Meliot,' saith the damsel, 'This is Lancelot, that bringeth you your healing.' 'Ha, Sir, welcome may you be!' 'God grant you health speedily,' saith Lancelot. 'Ha, for God's sake,' saith Meliot, 'What doth Messire Gawain? Is he hearty?' 'I left him quite hearty when I parted from him,' saith Lancelot, 'And so he knew that you had been wounded in such sort, full sorry would he be thereof and King Arthur likewise.' 'Sir,' saith he, 'The knight that assieged them maimed me in this fashion, but was himself maimed in such sort that he is dead thereof. But the wounds that he dealt me are so cruel and so raging, that they may not be healed save his sword toucheth them and if they be not bound with some of the winding-sheet wherein he was shrouded, that he had displayed about him, all bloody.' 'By my faith,' saith the damsel, 'Behold them were!' 'Ha, Sir,' saith he, 'Gramercy of his great goodness! In every way appeareth that that you are good knight, for, but for the goodness of your knighthood, the coffin wherein the knight lieth had never opened so lightly,

Meliot nor would you never have had the sword nor is healed the cloth, nor never till now hath knight entered therein but either he were slain there, or departed thence wounded right grievously.' They uncover his wounds, and Lancelot unbindeth them, and the damsel toucheth him of the sword and the winding-sheet, and they are assuaged for him. And he saith that now at last he knoweth well he need not fear to die thereof. Lancelot is right joyful thereof in his heart, for that he seeth he will be whole betimes, and sore pity had it been of his death, for a good knight was he, and wise and loyal.

## XII

'Lancelot,' saith the lady, 'Long time have I hated you on account of the knight that I loved whom you reft away from me and married to another and not to me, and oftentimes have I put myself to pains to grieve you of some ill deed for that you did to me, for never was I so sorrowful for aught that befell me. He loved me of right great love, and I him again, and never shall that love fail. But now is it far further away from me than it was before, and for this bounty that you have done, never hereafter need you fear aught of my grievance.' 'Damsel,' saith Lancelot, 'Gramercy heartily. He was lodged in the castle the night richly and worshipfully, and departed thence on the morrow when he had taken leave of the damsel and Meliot, and goeth back a great pace toward the court of King Arthur, that was sore dismayed, for Madeglant was conquering his island.

and great part of his land. The more part of Lancelot's lands that he conquered had renounced the New Law for fear of death and held the false believe. And Messire Gawain and many other knights were departed from King Arthur's court for that the King trusted more in Briant of the Isles than he did in them.

## XIII

For many times had King Arthur sent knights against Madeglant since Lancelot was departed from the court, to the intent that they should put to rebuke the enemies of his land, but never saw he one come back from thence nought discomfited. The King of Oriande made much boast that he would fulfil for his sister all that she had bidden him, for he thought that King Arthur would yield himself up betimes to him and yield all his land likewise. The King greatly desired the return of Lancelot, and said oftentimes that and he had been against his enemies as nigh as the others he had sent they would not have durst so to fly against him. In the midst of the dismay wherein was King Arthur, Lancelot returned to the court, whereof was the King right joyous. Lancelot knew that Messire Gawain and Messire Ywain were not there, and that they held them aloof from the court more willingly than they allowed on account of Briant of the Isles, that King Arthur believed in more than ever a one of the others. He was minded to depart in like sort, but the King would not let him, but said to him rather, 'Lancelot, I pray and beseech

**Madeglant is slain** you, as him that I love much, that you set your pains and your counsel on defending my land, for great affiance have I in you.' 'Sir,' saith Lancelot, 'My aid and my force shall fail you never; heed that yours fail not me.' 'Of right ought I not to fail you,' saith the King, 'Nor will I never, for I should fail myself thereby.'

## XIV

The history saith that he gave Lancelot for knights in charge, and that he is come into an island where King Madeglant was. Or ere he knew of his coming, Lancelot had cut off his retreat, for he cut his cables and beat his anchors to pieces and broke up his ships. After that, he struck among the people of Madeglant and slew as many of them as he would, he and his knights. The King thought to withdraw him back, both him and his fellowship, in safety as he wont, but he found himself right ill bested. Lancelot drove him toward the sea whither he fled, but only to find himself no less decomfit there, and slew him in the midst of his folk, and all his other knights were slain and cast into the sea. This island was freed from him by Lancelot, and from thence he went to the other islands that Madeglant had conquered and set again under the false Law, and there he did away the false Law from them that had been set thereunder by fear of death, and established the land in such sort as it had been before. He roved so long from one island to another that presently he came to Albanie where he had succoured them at first.



## XV

Lancelot's new ordinance

When they of the land saw him come, they all knew that the King of Oriande was dead and the islands made free, whereof made they great joy. The land was some deal emptied of the most puissant and the strongest, for they were dead along with their lord. Lancelot had brought with him some of the best knights and most puissant. He was come with a great army into the land and began to destroy it. They of the land were misbelievers, for they believed in false idols and in false images. They saw that they might not defend the land, sith that their lord was dead. The more hurt let themselves be slain for that they would not renounce the evil Law, and they that were minded to turn to God were saved. The kingdom was right rich and right great that Lancelot conquered and attorned to the Law of Our Lord in such wise. He made break down the false images of copper and latten wherein they had believed tofore, and whereof false answers came to them of the voices of devils. Hereafter he caused be made crucifixes and images in the likeness of Our Lord, and in the likeness of His sweet Mother, the better to confirm them of the kingdoms in the Law.

## XVI

The strongest and most valiant of the land assembled one day and said that it was high time a land so rich should no longer be without King. They all agreed and came to Lance-

**King** lot and told him how they would fain th  
**Claudas** he should be King of the realm he had co  
 quered, for in no land might he be bette  
 employed, and they would help him conqu  
 other realms enow. Lancelot thanked the  
 much, but told them that of this land nor  
 none other would he be King save by th  
 approval of King Arthur only; for that all th  
 conquest he had made was his, and by hi  
 commandment had he come thither, and ha  
 given him his own knights in charge that ha  
 helped him to reconquer the lands.

## XVII

King Claudas had heard tell how Lancelot  
 had slain the King of Oriande and that none  
 the islands might scarce be defended again  
 him. He had no liking of him, neither of hi  
 good knighthood nor of his conquest, for we  
 remembered he of the land that he had co  
 quered from King Ban of Benoit that wa  
 Lancelot's father, and therefore was he sorr  
 of the good knighthood whereof Lancelot wa  
 everywhere held of worth and renown, for th  
 he was tenant of his father's land. King  
 Claudas sent a privy message to Briant and bor  
 him on hand that, and he might do so much  
 that King Arthur should forbid Lancelot hi  
 court, and that it were ill with him with th  
 King, he would have much liking thereof and  
 would help him betimes to take vengeance o  
 his enemies, for, so Lancelot were forth of hi  
 court, and Messire Gawain, the rest woul  
 scarce abide long time, and thus should the

we all their will of King Arthur's land. Briant's  
 giant sent word back to King Claudas that treason  
 Messire Gawain and Messire Ywain began to  
 bid them aloof from the court, and that as for  
 the rest part of the other he need not trouble him  
 whit, for he might so deal as that in short  
 the Lancelot should be well trounced, would  
 they or nould they.

## XVIII

Tidings are come to King Arthur's court  
 that the King of Oriande is dead and his people  
 destroyed, and that Lancelot hath conquered  
 his kingdom and slain the King, and reconquered  
 all the lands wherein he had set the false Law  
 and the false believe by his force and by dread  
 of him. And the more part say in the court  
 that they of the realm of Oriande nor those of  
 the other islands will not let Lancelot repair to  
 court, and are doing their endeavour to make  
 him King; and nought is there in the world,  
 and he command them, they will not do, and  
 that never was no folk so obedient to any as are  
 they of all these lands to him. Briant of the  
 Isles cometh one day privily to King Arthur,  
 and saith: 'Sir,' saith he, 'Much ought I to  
 love you, for that you have made me Seneschal  
 of your land; whereby meseemeth you have  
 great affiance in me, and my bounden duty is it  
 to turn aside that which is evil from you and to  
 set forward your good everywhere, and, did I  
 not so, no whit loyal should I be towards you.

More  
treason

## XIX

‘Tidings are come to me of late that the kingdom of Oriande and Albanie and of other islands that are your appanages have leagued together, and have sworn and gi surety that they will aid one another agai you, and they are going presently to m Lancelot their King, and will come down u your land as speedily as they may wheresoe he may dare lead them, and they have sw their oath that they will conquer your kingd just as you now hold it, and, so you be garnished against them betimes, you may b thereof sore trouble to your own body as v as the loss whereof I tell you.’ ‘By my he saith the King, ‘I believe not that Lancelot durst think this, nor that he would have heart to do me evil.’ ‘By my head,’ sa Briant, ‘Long time have I had misgivings b of this and of him, but one ought not to one’s lord all that one knows, for that cannot be sure either that it be not leasing that folk wish to meddle in his affairs out envy. But nought is there in the world th will conceal from you henceforward for the l that you bear me and for that you have affia in me, and so may you well have, for I h abandoned my land for you that marched v your own, whereby you may sorely strai your enemies, for well you know that in y court is there no knight of greater power t am I.’

## XX

Arthur  
betrayeth  
Lancelot

‘By my head,’ saith the King, ‘I am fain to  
re you and hold you dear, nor shall you never  
removed from my love nor from my service  
nought that may be said of any, so manifestly  
ve I seen your goodness and your loyalty. I  
ll bid Lancelot by my letters and under my  
d that he come to speak with me, for sore  
ed have I thereof, and when he shall be here  
will take account of this that you have told  
, for this will I not, that he nor none other  
it may be my knight shall dare rise in arms  
inst me, for such power ought lord of right  
have over his knight, and to be feared and  
eaded of him, for elsewhere is he feeble, and  
dship without power availeth nought.’

## XXI

The King sent his letters by his messenger  
Lancelot. The messenger sought him until  
found him in the kingdom of Oriande, and  
livered him the letters and the seal of the  
ng. So soon as he knew that which the  
ters say, he took leave of them of the land,  
it were right sorrowful. He departed thence  
d came back to Cardoil, bringing with him all  
e knights that he had in charge, and told the  
ng that he had reconquered for him all the  
nds, and that the King of Oriande was dead  
d that his land was attorned to the Law of  
r Lord. The King bade Briant of the Isles  
t he should make forty knights come armed  
der their cloaks ready to take Lancelot

**Lancelot taken prisoner** prisoner as soon as he should command the  
 The tidings come to Lancelot, there where-  
 was in his hostel, that the King had ma-  
 knights come all armed to the palace. Lancelot  
 bethought him that some need had arisen  
 and that he would arm himself likewise, so  
 made him be armed and came to the hall where  
 the King was. 'Sir,' saith Briant, 'Lancelot  
 thinketh him of something, for he hath armed  
 himself at his hostel, and is come hither in such  
 manner and at such time without your leave,  
 he may do something more yet. You ought  
 well to ask him wherefore he wisheth to do  
 evil, and in what manner you have deserved  
 it.' He biddeth him be called before him.  
 'Lancelot,' saith the King, 'Wherefore  
 you armed?' 'Sir, I was told that knights  
 come in hither armed, and I was feared  
 some mishap had befallen you, for I would  
 that any evil should betide you.' 'You come  
 hither for another thing,' saith the King,  
 'according to that I have been given to  
 and, had the hall been void of folk, you had  
 to have slain me.' The King commandeth  
 be taken forthwith without gainsay of any.  
 The knights that were armed did off their  
 cloaks and leapt toward him on all sides,  
 they durst not disobey the King's command-  
 ment, and the more part were men of Briant  
 the Isles.

## XXII

Lancelot seeth them coming towards him  
 with their keen swords and saith, 'By

ad, an evil guerdon do you return me of the by  
vices I have done for you.' The knights Briant's  
me to him all together swords drawn, and men  
upon him all at once. He goeth defending  
nself, as far as the wall of the hall, whereof  
maketh a castle to his back, but before he  
meth thither he hath slain or wounded seven.  
e began to defend himself right stoutly on all  
es, but they give him great buffets of their  
ords, and no fair play is it of thirty or forty  
ws to one. Nor ought none believe that  
e single knight might deliver himself from so  
ny men, seeing that they were eager to take  
n and to do him a hurt. Lancelot defended  
n the best he might, but the numbers were  
inst him, and, anyway, or ever he let himself  
taken he sold himself right dear, for of the  
ty knights he harmed at least a score, and  
them was none that was not sore wounded  
d the most part killed; and he caught Briant  
the Isles, that was helping to take him, so  
e that he made his sword drink the blood of  
body, in such sort that the wound was right  
de. The knights laid hold on Lancelot on  
sides, and the King commanded that none  
ould harm him, but that they should bring  
n to his dungeon in the prison. Lancelot  
rvelled him much wherefore the King should  
this, nor might he understand wherefore  
s hatred was come so lately. He is put in  
e prison so as the King hath commanded.  
d they of the court are sorry thereof, save  
iant and his knights, but well may he yet  
y it dear, so God bring Lancelot out of

**A** prison. Some say, 'Now is the King's co  
**prophecy** lost, sith that Messire Gawain and the o  
knights have thus forsaken it, and Lancelo  
put in prison for doing well, ill trust may  
others have therein.' They pray God  
grant Briant of the Isles an evil guerdon,  
well know they that all this is of his procu  
ment. And of an evil guerdon shall he  
fail so God protect Lancelot and bring h  
forth of prison.



## BRANCH XXXI

### TITLE I

HEREUPON the story is silent of Aristot's Lancelot, and cometh back to Perceval custom at had not heard these tidings, and if he had known them, right sorrowful would he have been thereof. He is departed from his uncle's castle that he hath reconquered, and was sore grieved of the tidings that the damsel that was wounded brought him of his sister that Aristot had carried away by force to the house of a wizard. He was about to take her to wife and cut off her head on the day of the New Year, for such was his custom with all them that he took. Perceval rideth one day, all away in thought, and taketh his way as fast as may toward the hermitage of his uncle King Hermit. He is come thither on an eventide, and seeth three hermits issued forth of the hermitage. He alighteth and goeth to meet them so soon as he seeth them. 'Sir,' say the hermits, 'Enter not in, for they are laying out body there.' 'Who is it?' saith Perceval. 'Sir,' say the hermits, 'It is the good King Pelles that Aristot slew suddenly after mass on account of one of his nephews, Perceval, whom he loveth not, and a damsel is laying out the body there within.' When Perceval heard the

King news of his uncle that is dead, thereof was he  
 Hermit right grieved at heart, and on the morrow was  
 slain he at his uncle's burial. When mass was sung,  
 Perceval would have departed, as he that had  
 great desire to take vengeance on him that had  
 done him such shame.

## II

Thereupon behold you the damsel <sup>comes to</sup> that ~~that~~  
 his. 'Sir,' saith she, 'Full long time have I  
 been seeking you. Behold here the head of  
 a knight that I carry hanging at the bow of  
 my saddle, in this rich casket of ivory that you  
 may see, and by none ought he to be avenged  
 but by you alone. Discharge me thereof, fair  
 Sir, of your courtesy, for I have carried it too  
 long a time, and this King Arthur knoweth  
 well and Messire Gawain, for each hath seen  
 me at court along with the head, but they could  
 give me no tidings of you, and my castle may  
 not have again until such time as he be avenged.  
 'Who, then, was the knight, damsel?' saith  
 Perceval. 'Sir, he was son of your uncle  
 Bruns Brandalis, and were he on live, would  
 have been one of the best knights in the world.  
 'And who slew him, damsel?' saith Perceval.  
 'Sir, the Knight of the Deep Forest that  
 leadeth the lion, foully in treason there where  
 he thought him safe. For had he been armed  
 in like manner as was the other, he would not  
 have slain him.' 'Damsel,' saith Perceval,  
 'This grieveth me that he hath slain him, and  
 it grieveth me likewise of mine uncle King  
 Hermit, whom I would avenge more willingly

han all the men in the world, for he was slain  
in my account. The Red Knight

## III

‘Most disloyal was this knight, and foully was he fain to avenge him when he slew a holy man, a hermit that never wished him ill on account of me and of none other. Right glad shall I be and I may find the knight, and so, methinketh, will he be of me, for me he hateth as much I do him, as I have been told, and Lord God grant, howsoever he may take it, that I may find him betimes. ‘Sir,’ saith the damsel, ‘So outrageous a knight is he that no knight is there in the world so good but he thinketh himself of more worth than he, and with that he hateth you with a will, and he knew that you were here, you and another, or you the third, he would come now at once, were you in place and free.’ ‘Damsel,’ saith Perceval, ‘God give him mischief of his coming, come whensoever he may!’ ‘Sir,’ saith she, ‘The Deep Forest there, where the Red Knight watcheth the lion, is towards the castle of Aristot, and, or ever you come by adventure into the forest, you may well hear some tidings of him!’

XVI

BRANCH XXXII

INCIPIT

Aristot  
and  
Dindrane

**H**ERE beginneth the last branch of the  
Grael in the name of the Father, and of  
the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

TITLE I

The story saith that Perceval went his way  
through the forest. He saw pass before him  
two squires, and each carried a wild deer  
trussed behind him that had been taken by  
hounds. Perceval cometh to them a great  
pace and maketh them abide. 'Lords,' saith  
he, 'Whither will you carry this venison?'  
'Sir,' say the squires, 'To the castle of Aristot  
whereof Aristot is lord.' 'Is there great  
throng of knights at the castle?' saith Perceval.  
'Sir,' say the squires, 'Not a single one  
there, but within four days will be a thousand  
there, for Messire is about to marry, where  
is great preparation toward. He is going to  
take the daughter of the Widow Lady, whom  
he carried off by force before her castle of  
Camelot, and hath set her in the house of one  
of his vavasours until such time as he shall  
espouse her. But we are right sorrowful, for  
she is of most noble lineage and of great beauty  
and of the most worth in the world. So is

great dole that he shall have her, for he will cut her head off on the day of the New Year, sith that such is his custom.' 'And one might carry her off,' saith Perceval, 'would he not do well therein?' 'Yea, Sir!' say the squires, 'Our Lord God would be well pleased thereof, for such cruelty is the greatest that ever any knight may have. Moreover, he is much blamed of a good hermit that he hath slain, and every day desireth he to meet the brother of the damsel he is about to take, that is one of the best knights in the world. And he saith that he would slay him more gladly than ever another knight on live.' 'And where is your lord?' saith Perceval, 'Can you give me witting?' 'Yea, Sir,' say the squires, 'We parted from him but now in this forest, where he held melly with a knight that seemeth us to be right worshipful and valiant, and saith that he hath for name the Knight Hardy. And for that he told Aristot that he was a knight of Perceval's and of his fellowship, he ran upon him, and then commanded us to come on, and said that he should vanquish him incontinent. We could still hear just now the blows of the swords yonder where we were in the forest, and Aristot is of so cruel conditions that no knight may pass through this forest, but he is minded to slay him.'

## II

When Perceval heard these tidings, he departed from the squires, and so soon as they were out of sight he goeth as great pace thither

Tidings  
of Aristot

**The Knight Hardy** as they had come thence. He had ridden half a league Welsh when he heard the buffets they were dealing one another on the helm with their swords, and right well pleased was he for that the Knight Hardy held so long time melly with Aristot in whom is there so much cruelty and felony. But Perceval knew not to what mischief the Knight Hardy had been wounded through the body of a spear, so that the blood rayed out on all sides; and Aristot had not remained whole, for he was wounded in two places. So soon as Perceval espied them, he smiteth his horse of his spurs, lance in rest, and smiteth Aristot right through the breast with such force that he maketh him lose his stirrups and lie down backwards over the hinder bow of the saddle. After that saith he: 'I am come to my sister's wedding, of right ought it not to be made without me.'

## III

Aristot, that was full hardy, set himself again between the bows of the saddle in great wrath when he seeth Perceval, and cometh towards him like as if he were wood mad, sword in hand, and dealeth him such a buffet on the helm as that it is all dented in thereby. The Knight Hardy draweth back when he seeth Perceval, for he is wounded to the death through the body. He had held the stour so long time that he could abide no more. But or ever he departed, he had wounded Aristot in two places right grievously. Perceval felt the blow that was heavy, and that his helmet was dented in.

He cometh back to Aristot and smiteth him so passing strongly that he thrusteth the spear right through his body and overthroweth him and his horse all of a heap. Then he alighteth over him and taketh off the coif of his habergeon and unlaceth his ventail. 'What have you in mind to do?' saith Aristot. 'I will cut off your head,' saith Perceval, 'and present it to my sister whom you have failed.' 'Do not so!' saith Aristot, 'But let me live, and I will forgo my hatred.' 'Your hatred might I well abide henceforward, meseemeth,' saith Perceval, 'But one may not abide you any longer, for well have you deserved this, and God willeth not to bear with you.' He smiteth off his head incontinent and hangeth it at his saddle-bow, and cometh to the Knight Hardy, and asketh him how it is with him. 'Sir,' saith he, 'I am very nigh my death, but I comfort me much of this that I see you tofore I die.' Perceval is remounted on his horse, then taketh his spear and leaveth the body of the knight in the midst of the launde, and so departeth forthwith and leadeth the Knight Hardy to a hermitage that was hard by there, and lifteth him down of his horse as speedily as he may. After that, he disarmed him and made him confess to the hermit, and when he was shriven of his sins and repentant, and his soul had departed, he made him be enshrouded of the damsel that followed him, and bestowed his arms and his horse on the hermit for his soul, and the horse of Aristot likewise.

Perceval  
slayeth  
Aristot

The Red  
Knight's  
lion

## IV

When mass had been sung for the knight that was dead, and the body buried, Perceval departed. 'Sir,' saith the damsel that followeth him, 'Even now have you much to do. Of this cruel knight and felonous you have avenged this country. Now, God grant you find betimes the Red Knight that slew your uncle's son. I doubt not but that you will conquer him, but great misgiving have I of the lion, for it is the cruellest beast that saw I ever, and he so loveth his lord and his horse as never no beast loved another so much, and he helpeth his lord right hardily to defend him.'

## V

Perceval goeth toward the great Deep Forest without tarrying, and the damsel after. But, once ever he came thither, he met a knight that was wounded right sore, both he and his horse. 'Ha, Sir,' saith he to Perceval, 'Enter not into this forest, whence I have scarce escaped with much pains. For therein is a knight that has much trouble of rescuing me from his lion; and no less am I in dread to pass on forward, for there is a knight that is called Aristot, that without occasion runneth upon the knights that pass through the forest.' 'Of him,' saith the damsel, 'need you have no fear, for you may see his head hanging at the knight's saddle bow.'



## VI

Aristot's  
horse

‘Certes,’ saith the knight, ‘Never yet was I glad of any tidings I have heard, and well now I that he that slew him is not lacking of eat hardiment.’ The knight departeth from Perceval, but the lion had wounded his horse so passing sore in the quarters that scarce could he. ‘Sir Knight,’ saith Perceval, ‘Go to the hermit in the Deep Forest, and say I bade him re you the destrier I left with him, for well I see that you have sore need thereof, and you may repay him in some other manner, for rather could he have something else than the horse.’ The knight giveth him much thanks of this that he saith. He cometh to the hermit the best he may, and telleth him according as he had been argued, and the hermit biddeth him take which destrier he will for the love of the knight that had slain the evil-doer, that did so many evil deeds in this forest. ‘And I will lend you them both twain if you will.’ ‘Sir,’ saith the knight, ‘I ask but for one of them.’ He taketh Aristot’s horse, that seemed him the better, and straightway mounteth thereon, and abandoneth his own, that might go no further. He taketh leave of the hermit, and telleth him he will right well repay him, but better had it fallen him and he had not taken the horse, for thereof was he slain without reason therefor. A knight that was of the household of Aristot overtook him at the corner of the forest, and knew his lord’s horse and had heard tell that Aristot was dead, wherefore he went into

**Perceval** the forest to bury him. He smote the kn  
**slayeth** through the body with his spear and so  
**the lion** him, then took the horse and went away fo  
 with. But, had Perceval known thereof  
 would have been little glad, for that he a  
 the knight to go for the horse, but he d  
 only for the best, and for that he rode in  
 miscase.

## VII

Perceval goeth toward the Deep Forest,  
 is full broad and long and evil seeming,  
 when he was entered in, he had scarce ri  
 a space when he espied the lion that lay in  
 midst of a launde under a tree and was wa  
 for his master, that was gone afar into  
 forest, and the lion well knew that just t  
 was the way whereby knights had to  
 and therefore had abided there. The da  
 draweth her back for fear, and Perceval g  
 toward the lion that had espied him alre  
 and came toward him, eyes on fire and  
 yawning wide. Perceval aimeth his spear  
 thinketh to smite him in his open mouth, b  
 lion swerved aside and he caught him in  
 fore-leg and so dealt him a great wound, b  
 lion seizeth the horse with his claws on  
 croup, and rendeth the skin and the  
 above the tail. The horse, that feeleth hi  
 wounded, catcheth him with his two hinde  
 or ever he could get away, so passing stre  
 that he breaketh the master-teeth in his  
 The lion gave out a roar so loud that a  
 forest resounded thercof. The Red K

heareth his lion roar, and so cometh thither a great gallop, but, ere ever he was come thither, Perceval had slain the lion. When the knight saw his lion dead, right sorry was he thereof. By my head,' saith he to Perceval, 'When you slew my lion you did it as a traitor!' 'And thou,' saith Perceval, 'adjudged your own death when you slew my uncle's son, whose head this damsel beareth.' Perceval cometh against him without more words, and the knight in like manner with a great rushing, and breaketh his spear upon his shield. Perceval smiteth him with such force that he thrusteth his spear right through his body and beareth him to the ground dead beside his horse. Perceval alighteth of his own when he hath slain the knight, and then mounteth him on the Red Knight's horse so that his own might carry him no longer.

## VIII

'Sir,' saith the damsel, 'My castle is in the midst of this forest, that the Red Knight left away from me long ago. I pray you now come with me thither that I may be assured thereof in such sort as that I may have it again wholly.' 'Damsel,' saith Perceval, 'This have I no right to deny you.' They ride amidst the forest so long as that they come to the castle where the damsel ought to be. It stood in the fairest place of all the forest, and was enclosed of high walls battlemented, and within were fair-windowed halls. The tidings were come to the castle that their lord was dead.

Dindrane Perceval and the damsel entered in. H  
lamenteth the damsel be assured of them that were  
and made them yield up her castle th  
well knew was hers of right inheritance  
damsel made the head be buried that  
carried so long, and bade that every day  
mass be done within for the soul of him.  
Perceval had sojourned therein as long as  
him, he departed thence. The damsel  
him much of the bounty he had done her  
cerning the castle that she had again by  
never again should it be reconquered of a  
as well she knew.

## IX

Josephus telleth us in the scripture he rec  
for us, whereof this history was drawn  
Latin into Romance, that none need be in  
that these adventures befell at that time in  
Britain and in all the other kingdoms, and  
enow more befell than I record, but these  
the most certain. The history saith  
Perceval is come into a hold, there wh  
sister was in the house of a vavasour th  
a right worshipful man. Each day the d  
made great dole of the knight that was to  
her, for the day was already drawing som  
nigh, and she knew not that he was dead.  
often lamented she the Widow Lady her m  
that in like sort made great dole for her dau  
The vavasour comforted the damsel right s  
and longed for her brother Perceval, but  
thought he that he was so near him.  
Perceval is come to the hold all armed.

ghteth at the mounting-stage before the hall. Perceval  
 e vavasour cometh to meet him, and marvelleth com-  
 ich who he is, for the more part believed that forteth  
 was one of Aristot's knights. 'Sir,' saith her  
 e vavasour, 'Welcome may you be!' 'Good  
 venture may you have, Sir!' saith Perceval.  
 e holdeth Aristot's head in his hand by the  
 ir, whereof the vavasour marvelled much that  
 should carry a knight's head in such-wise.  
 rceval cometh to the master-chamber of the  
 ll, where his sister was, that bewailed her  
 ht sore.

## X

'Damsel,' saith he to his sister, 'Weep not,  
 your wedding hath failed. You may know  
 well by this token!' He throweth the head  
 Aristot before her on the ground, then saith  
 her: 'Behold here the head of him that was  
 take you!' The damsel heareth Perceval her  
 other that was armed, and thereby she knoweth  
 n again. She leapeth up and maketh him the  
 latest joy that ever damsel made to knight.  
 e knoweth not what to do. So joyful is she,  
 it all have pity on her that see her of her  
 eeping for the joy that she maketh of her  
 other. The story saith that they sojourned  
 rewithin and that the vavasour showed them  
 ich honour. The damsel made cast the  
 ight's head into a river that ran round about  
 e hold. The vavasour was right glad of his  
 ath for the great felony that he had in him,  
 l for that needs must the damsel die in less  
 n a year and she had espoused him.

Perceval  
and  
Dindrane

## XI

When Perceval had been therein as long as it pleased him, he thanked the vavasour much of the honour he had done him and his sister, and departed, he and his sister along with him on the mule whereon she had been brought thither. Perceval rode so long on his journeys that he came to Camelot and findeth his mother in great dole for her daughter that should be ~~was ravished~~ Queen, for she thought surely that never should she see her more. Full sorrowful was she moreover of her brother, the King Hermit that had been killed in such-wise. Perceval cometh to the chamber where his mother was lying and might not stint of making dole. He taketh his sister by the hand and cometh before her. So soon as she knoweth him she beginneth to weep for joy, and kisseth them one after the other. 'Fair son,' saith she, 'Blessed be the hour that you were born, for by you all my great joy cometh back to me! Now well may I depart for I have lived long enow.' 'Lady,' saith he, 'Your life ought to be an offence to none, for none hath it ever done ill, but, please God, you shall not end in this place, but rather you shall end in the castle that was your cousin's german King Fisherman, there where is the most Holy Graal and the sacred hallows are.' 'Fair son,' saith she, 'You say well, and there would fain be.' 'Lady,' saith he, 'God will provide counsel and means whereby you shall be there and my sister, and she be minded to marry, we will set in good place, where she may live worshiping

7.' 'Certes, fair brother,' saith she, 'None return to  
I never marry, save God alone.' 'Fair Camelot  
' saith the Widow Lady, 'The Damsel of  
Car goeth to seek you, and I shall end not  
such time as she hath found you.' 'Lady,'  
he, 'In some place will she have tidings of  
and I of her.' 'Fair son,' saith the Lady,  
the damsel is here within that the felonous  
ght wounded through the arm, that carried  
your sister, but she is healed.' 'Lady,' saith  
'I am well avenged.' He telleth her all the  
entures until the time when he reconquered  
castle that was his uncle's. He sojourned  
time with his mother in the castle, and saw  
the land was all assured and peaceable.  
departed thence and took his leave, for  
had not yet achieved all that he had to do.  
mother remained long time, and his sister,  
amelot, and led a good life and a holy. The  
made make a chapel right rich about the  
lchre that lay between the forest and  
amelot, and had it adorned of rich vestments,  
stablished a chaplain that should sing mass  
e every day. Sithence then hath the place  
so builded up as that there is an abbey  
e and folk of religion, and many bear witness  
there it is still, right fair. Perceval was  
urtd from Camelot and entered into the  
t forest, and so rode of a long while until  
had left his mother's castle far behind, and  
e toward evening to the hold of a knight  
was at the head of the forest. He  
oured him therein, and the knight showed  
much honour and made him be unarmed,

Aristot's and brought him a robe to do on. Perceval's horse seeth that the knight is a right simple man, that he sigheth from time to time.

## XII

'Sir,' saith he, 'Meseemeth you are not joyous.' 'Certes, Sir,' saith the knight, 'I have no right to be, for a certain man slew my own brother towards the Deep Forest not long since, and no right have I to be glad, for that worshipful man was he and a loyal.' 'I know, Sir,' saith Perceval, 'Know you who slew him?' 'Fair Sir, it was one of Aristot's knights, for that he was sitting upon a horse that had been Aristot's, and whereon another knight had slain him, and a hermit had lent it to my brother for that the Red Knight's horse had maimed his own.' Perceval was little moved of these tidings, for that he had sent him a horse that had been slain on account of the horse. 'Sir,' saith Perceval, 'Your brother had not deserved his death, methinketh, for it was not he that slew the knight.' 'No, Sir, I know it all to be a truth, but another, that slew the Red Knight of the Deep Forest.' Perceval was silent thereupon. He lay the night at the hostel where he was harboured right well, and on the morrow he departed when he had taken leave. He wandered until he came to a hermitage there where he heard mass. After the service, the hermit came to him and said: 'Sir,' saith he, 'In this forest are knights all armed that are keeping watch for the knight that slew Aristot and the Red Knight and his lion as well as we.'



herefore they meet no knight in this forest **Perceval**  
 t they are minded to slay him for the knight **slayeth**  
 it slew these twain.' 'Sir,' saith Perceval, **two**  
 'od keep me from meeting such folk as would **knights**  
 me evil.'

## XIII

With that he departed from the hermitage  
 d took leave of the hermit, and rideth until  
 t he is come into the forest and espieth the  
 ight that sitteth on Aristot's horse for that he  
 th slain the other knight. A second knight  
 s with him. They abide when they see  
 rceval. 'By my head,' saith one of them,  
 'his same shield bare he that slew Aristot, as  
 was told us, and, like enough, it may be he.'  
 ey come toward him, full career. Perceval  
 th them coming, and forgetteth not his spurs,  
 : rather cometh against them the speediest he  
 y. The two knights smote him upon the  
 eld and brake their spears. Perceval over-  
 eth him that sitteth on Aristot's horse and  
 usteth an ell's length of his spear through his  
 ly and so overthroweth him dead.

## XIV

After that, he cometh to the other knight,  
 t fain would have fled, and smiteth off the  
 oulder close to his side, and he fell dead by  
 : side of the other. He taketh both twain of  
 ir destriers, and knotteth the reins together  
 d driveth them before him as far as the house  
 the hermit, that had issued forth of his  
 mitage. He delivered to him the horse of

**Perceval** Aristot, and the other of the knight that he  
**sore** sent thither. 'Sir,' saith Perceval, 'We  
**needed** know that and you shall see any knight  
 hath need of it and shall ask you, you will  
 him one of these horses, for great courtesy  
 to aid a worshipful man when one seeth him  
 misfortune.' 'Sir,' saith the hermit, 'But  
 since, were here three knights. So soon  
 they knew that the two were dead whose  
 you have delivered to me, they departed, for  
 the speediest they might. I praised them  
 of their going, and told them they did well  
 to die on such occasion, for that the souls  
 knights that die under arms are nigher to  
 than Paradise.'

## XV

Perceval, that never was without sore  
 and travail so long as he lived, departed  
 the hermitage and went with great diligence  
 right through the midst of the forest, and  
 a knight that came a great gallop over against  
 him. He knew Perceval by the shield that  
 bare. 'Sir,' saith he, 'I come from the  
 of the Black Hermit, there where you will  
 the Damsel of the Car as soon as you arrive  
 wherefore she sendeth you word by me that  
 speed your way and go to her to ask for the  
 board that was taken away from before  
 Gawain, or otherwise never again will you  
 into the castle you have won. Sir,' saith  
 'Haste, moreover, on account of a thing  
 pitiful that I heard in this forest. I heard  
 a knight was leading a damsel against her

eating her with a great scourge. I passed **A**  
 y the launde on the one side and he on the **churlish**  
 ther, so that I espied him through the under- **knight**  
 hood that was between us; but it seemed me  
 at the damsel was bemoaning her for the son  
 f the Widow Lady that had given her back  
 er castle, and the knight said that for love  
 f him he would put her into the Serpent's pit.  
 An old knight and a priest went after the knight  
 o pray him have mercy on the damsel, but  
 o cruel is he, that so far from doing so, he  
 urther waxed sore wroth for that they prayed it  
 f him, and made cheer and semblant as though  
 e would have slain them.' The knight de-  
 arteth from Perceval and taketh leave, and  
 erceval goeth along the way that the knight  
 ad come, thinking that he would go after the  
 amsel, for he supposeth certainly that it is she  
 o whom he gave back her castle, and would  
 un know what knight it is that entreateth her  
 a such fashion. He hath ridden until he is  
 ome into the deepest of the forest and the  
 ickest. He bideth awhile and listeneth and  
 eareth the voice of the damsel, that was in  
 great valley where the Serpent's pit was,  
 wherein the knight was minded to set her.  
 he cried right loud for mercy, and wept, and  
 he knight gave her great strokes of the scourge  
 o make her be still. Perceval had no will  
 o tarry longer, but rather cometh thither as  
 ast as he may.

## XVI

So soon as the damsel seeth Perceval, she  
 noweth him again. She claspeth her two

The hands together and saith, 'Ha, Sir, for God  
 Serpent's sake have mercy! Already have you given  
 Pit back the castle whereof this knight would reave  
 me.' The horse whereon Perceval sat, the  
 knight knew him. 'Sir,' saith he, 'This horse  
 was the horse of Messire the Red Knight of the  
 Deep Forest! Now at last know I that it was  
 you that slew him!' 'It may well be,' saith  
 Perceval, 'And if that I slew him, good right  
 had I to do so, for he had cut off the head of  
 son of mine uncle, the which head this damsel  
 carried of a long time.' 'By my head,' saith  
 the knight, 'Sith that you slew him, you are  
 my mortal enemy!' So he draweth off in the  
 midst of the launde and Perceval likewise, and  
 then they come together as fast as their horses  
 may carry them, and either giveth other great  
 buffets in the midst of their breast with the  
 spears the most they may. Perceval smite  
 the knight so passing hard that he overthroweth  
 him to the ground right over the croup of his  
 horse, and in the fall that he made, he broke  
 him the master-bone of his leg so that he might  
 not move. And Perceval alighteth to the  
 ground and cometh where the knight lay. And  
 he crieth him mercy that he slay him not.  
 And Perceval telleth him he need not fear  
 death, nor that he is minded to slay him in  
 such plight as he is, but that like as he was faine  
 to make the damsel do he will make him do.  
 He maketh alight the other old knight and the  
 priest, then maketh the knight be carried to  
 the Pit of the Serpent and the worms, where  
 was great store. The pit was dark and deep.

Then that the knight was therein he might live long for the worms that were there. An evil believe he damsel thanked Perceval much of this goodness and of the other that he had done for her. She departeth and returneth again to her castle, and was assured therein on all sides, and never thereafter had she dread of no knight, for the cruel justice that Perceval had done on her is one.

## XVII

The son of the Widow Lady of his goodighthood knoweth not how to live without avail. He well knoweth that when he hath been at the Black Hermit's castle, he will in some measure have achieved his task. But for any another thing behoveth him to do tofore, and little toil he thinketh it, whereof shall God be well pleased. He hath ridden so far one day and another, that he came into a land where he met knights stout and strong there where God was neither believed in nor loved, but here rather they adored false images and false word-Gods and devils that made themselves manifest. He met a knight at the entrance of a forest. 'Ha, Sir!' saith he to Perceval, 'Return you back! No need is there for you to go further, for the folk of this island are not all-believers in God. I may not pass through the land but by truce only. The Queen of this land was sister of the King of Oriande, that Lancelot killed in the battle and all his folk, and seized his land, wherein all the folk were misbelievers. Now throughout all the

Queen land they believe in the Saviour of the World  
Jandree Thereof is she passing sorrowful, and hate  
all them that believe in the New Law, insomuch  
as that she would not look upon any that  
believed, and prayed to her gods that never  
might she see none until such time as the New  
Law should be overthrown; and God, that  
hath power to do this, blinded her forthwith.  
Now she supposeth that the false gods where  
she believeth have done this, and saith that  
when the New Law shall fall, she will have  
her sight again by the renewal of these gods,  
and by their virtue, nor, until this hour, has  
she no desire to see. And I tell you that  
saith the knight, 'because I would not that you  
should go thither as yet, for that I misdoubted  
your being troubled thereby.' 'Sir, gramercy',  
saith Perceval, 'But no knighthood is there  
fair as that which is undertaken to set forth  
the Law of God, and for Him ought one  
make better endeavour than for all other.  
In like manner as He put His body in pain and  
travail for us, so ought each to put his own  
for Him.' He departeth from the knight, and  
was right joyous of this that he heard him say  
that Lancelot had won a kingdom wherein  
he had done away the false Law. But and he  
knew the tidings that the King had put him  
in prison, he would not have been glad at it,  
for Lancelot was of his lineage and was the  
fore good knight, and for this he loved him  
right well.

## XVIII

The  
Raving  
Castle

Perceval rideth until nightfall, and findeth a great castle, fortified with a great drawbridge, and there were tall ancient towers within. He espied at the door a squire that had the weight of a chain on his neck, and at the other end the chain was fixed to a great bulk of iron. The chain was as long as the length of the bridge. Then cometh he over against Perceval when he seeth him coming. 'Sir,' saith he, 'Meseemeth you believe in God?' 'Fair friend, so do I, the best I may.' 'Sir, for God's sake, enter not this castle!' 'Wherefore, fair friend?' saith Perceval. 'Sir,' saith he, 'I will tell you. I am Christian, even as are you, and I am thrall within there and guard this gate, as you see. But it is the most cruel castle that I know, and it is called the Raving Castle. There be three knights within there, full young and comely, but so soon as they see a knight of the New Law, forthwith are they out of their senses, and all raving mad, so that nought may endure between them. Moreover, there is within one of the fairest damsels that saw I ever. She guardeth the knights so soon as they begin to rave, and so much they dread her that they durst not disobey her commandment in aught that she willeth, for many folk would they evilly entreat were it not for her. And for that I am their thrall they put up with me, and I have no fear of them, but many is the Christian knight that hath come in hither that never hath issued hence.' 'Fair sweet friend,'

Three saith Perceval, 'I will enter in thither and I brothers may, for I should not know this day how to go elsewhither, and true it is that greater power hath God than the devil.' He entereth into the castle and alighteth in the midst of the courtyard.

## XIX

The damsel was at the windows of the hall that was of passing great beauty. She cometh down as soon as she may, and seeth Perceval come in and the cross on his shield, and knoweth well thereby that he is Christian. 'Ha, Sir, for God's sake,' saith she, 'Come not up above, for there be three of the comeliest knights that ever were seen that are playing at tables and at dice in a chamber, and they are brothers-german. They will all go out of their senses so soon as they shall see you!'

## XX

'Damsel,' saith Perceval, 'Please God, so shall they not, and such a miracle is good to see, for it is only right that all they who will not believe in God should be raving mad when they see the things that come of Him.' Perceval goeth up into the hall, all armed, for all that the damsel saith. She followeth him as fast as she may. The three knights espied Perceval all armed and the cross on his shield, and forthwith leapt up and were beside themselves. They rolled their eyes and tore themselves and roared like devils. There were axes and swords in the hall that they go to lay hold on, and they are fain to leap upon Perceval,



ut no power have they to do so, for such was slay each  
ie will of God. When they saw that they other  
ight not come a-nigh him, they ran either on  
ther and so slew themselves between them, nor  
ould they stint their fighting together for the  
amsel. Perceval beheld the miracle of these  
lks that were thus killed, and the damsel that  
ade right great dole thereof. 'Ha, damsel,'  
ith he, 'Weep not, but repent you of this  
lse believe, for they that are unwilling to  
elieve in God shall die like mad folks and  
evils!' Perceval made the squires that were  
ere within bear the bodies out of the hall, and  
ade them be cast into a running water, and  
raightway slew all the other, for that they  
ere not minded to believe. The castle was  
l emptied of the misbelieving folk save only  
e damsel and those that waited upon her, and  
e Christian thrall that guarded the gate.  
erceval set him forth of the chain, then led  
m up into the hall and made him disarm him.  
le found sundry right rich robes. The damsel,  
at was of right great beauty, looked at him  
d saw that he was a full comely knight, and  
ell pleased she was with him. She honoured  
m in right great sort, but she might not forget  
e three knights that were her brothers, and  
ade sore dole for them.

## XXI

'Damsel,' saith Perceval, 'Nought availeth  
to make this dole, but take comfort on some  
her manner.' Perceval looked at the hall  
om one end to the other and saw that it was

**A** right rich, and the damsel, in whom was  
damsel great beauty, stinted of making dole to look  
loveth Perceval. She seeth that he is comely knight  
and gentle and tall and well furnished of  
conditions, wherefore he pleaseth her much,  
forthwith beginneth she to love him, and said  
herself that, so he would leave his God for  
god in whom she believed, right glad was  
she be thereof, and would make him lord of  
castle, for it seemed her that better might  
not bestow it, and, sith that her brother  
dead, there may be no bringing of them  
and therefore better would it be to forget  
dole. But little knew she Perceval's thought  
for had she known that which he thinketh,  
would have imagined not this; for, and had  
been Christian he might not have been drawn  
love her in such sort as she thinketh, sith  
Josephus telleth us that never did he lose  
virginity for woman, but rather died virgin  
chaste and clean of his body. In this  
was she still, nor never might she refrain  
heart from him. Thinketh she rather that,  
he knew she was minded to love him, re-  
joyous would he be thereof, for that she is  
so passing beauty. Perceval asketh the damsel  
what she hath in her thought? 'Sir,' saith she,  
'Nought think I but only good and you will.'  
'Damsel,' saith Perceval, 'Never, please God,  
shall there be hindrance of me but that you  
renounce this evil Law and believe in the good.'  
'Sir,' saith she, 'Do you renounce your  
love of me, and I will do your commandment  
and your will.'

## XXII

Perceval  
well

'Damsel,' saith Perceval, 'Nought availeth tell me this. Were you man like as you are woman, your end would have come with the others. But, please God, your tribulation shall end itself to good.' 'Sir,' saith she, 'So you are willing to promise me that you will love me like as knight ought to love damsel, I am well inclined to believe in your God.' 'Damsel, I promise you as I am a Christian that so you are willing to receive baptism, I will love you as he that firmly believeth in God ought to love damsel.' 'Sir,' saith she, 'I ask no more of you.' She biddeth send for a holy man, a hermit that was in the forest appurtenant, and right gladly came he when he heard the tidings. They held her up and baptized her, both her and her damsels with her. Perceval held her at the font. Josephus witnesseth us in this history that she had for name Celestre. And great joy made she of her baptism, and her affections turned she to good. The hermit remained there with her, and taught her to understand the firm believe, and did the service of Our Lord. The damsel was of right good life and right holy, and ended thereafter in many good works.

## XXIII

Perceval departed from the castle, and gave thanks to Our Lord and praise, that He hath allowed him to conquer a castle so cruel and to attorn it to the Law. He went his way a great pace, all armed, until he came into a country

**Queen** wherein was great grief being made, and the **Jandree** more part said that he was come that should destroy their Law, for that already had he won their strongest castle. He is come towards an ancient castle that was at the head of a forest. He looketh and seeth at the entrance of the gateway a full great throng of folk. He seeth a squire come forth thence, and asketh him to whom belongeth the castle. 'Sir,' saith he, 'It is Queen Jandree's, that hath made her be brought before her gate with the folk you see yonder, for she hath heard tell how the knights of the Raving Castle are dead, and another knight that hath conquered the castle hath made the damsel be baptized, wherefore much she marvelleth how this may be. She is in much dread of losing her land, for her brother Madeglant of Oriande is dead, so that she may no longer look to none for succour, and she hath been told how the knight that conquered the Raving Castle is the Best Knight of the World, and that none may endure against him. For this doubtance and fear of him she is minded to go to one of her own castles that is somewhat stronger.' Perceval departeth from the squire and rideth until they that were at the entrance of the gateway espied him. They saw the Red Cross that he bare on his shield, and said to the Queen, 'Lady, a Christian knight is coming into this castle.' 'Take heed,' saith she, 'that it be not he that is about to overthrow our Law!' Perceval cometh thither and alighteth, and cometh before the Queen all armed. The Queen asketh what he seeketh.

## XXIV

wel-  
cometh  
Perceval

'Lady,' saith he, 'Nought seek I save  
 god only to yourself so you hinder it not.'  
 'You come,' saith she, 'from the Raving  
 castle, there where three brothers are slain,  
 hereof is great loss.' 'Lady,' saith he, 'At  
 that castle was I, and now fain would I that  
 our own were at the will of Jesus Christ, in  
 the manner as is that.' 'By my head,' saith  
 he, 'And your Lord hath so great power as is  
 his, so will it be.' 'Lady, His virtue and  
 his puissance are far greater than they say.'  
 'That would I fain know,' saith she, 'presently,  
 and I am fain to pray you that you depart not  
 from me until that it hath been proven.'  
 Perceval granteth it gladly. She returned into  
 the castle and Perceval with her. When he  
 was alighted he went up into the hall. They  
 that were within marvelled them much that she  
 would thus give consent, for never, sithence that  
 she had been blind, might she allow no knight  
 of the New Law to be so nigh her, and made  
 say all them that came into her power, nor  
 might she never see clear so long as she had one  
 of them before her. Now is her disposition  
 altered in such sort as that she would fain she  
 might see clear him that hath come in, for she  
 hath been told that he is the comeliest knight of  
 the world and well seemeth to be as good as  
 any witness of him.

## XXV

Perceval remained there gladly for that he  
 saw the lady's comelyty was somewhat slackened,

The and it seemed him that it would be gre  
Queen and she were willing to turn to God, and  
seeth that are within there, for well he knoweth  
clear so she should hold to the New Law, all the  
the land would be of the same mind.  
Perceval had lain the night at the castle.  
Lady on the morrow sent for all the  
powerful of her land, and came forth of  
chamber into the hall where Perceval  
seeing as clear as ever she had seen afore.  
'Lords,' saith she, 'Hearken ye all, for  
will I tell you the truth like as it hath be  
me. I was lying in my bed last night, and  
know ye that I saw not a whit, and made  
orisons to our gods that they would restore  
my sight. It seemed me they made a  
that they had no power so to do, but  
should make be slain the knight that was a  
here, and that and I did not, sore wroth  
they be with me. And when I had heard  
voices say that nought might they avail  
for that I had prayed of them, I remem  
me of the Lord in whom they that hold  
New Law believe. I prayed Him right so  
that, and so it were that He had such  
and such puissance as many said, He  
make me see clear, so as that I might be  
in Him. At that hour I fell on sleep  
meseemed that I saw one of the fairest I  
in the world, and she was delivered of a  
therewithin, and He had about Him a  
brightness of light like it were the sun sh  
right noonday.

## XXVI

The  
Queen's  
visions

‘When the Child was born, so passing fair as He and so passing gentle and of so sweet semblant that the looks of Him pleased me well; and meseemed that at His deliverance there was a company of folk the fairest that were ever, and they were like as it had been lords and made full great joy. And methought that an ancient man that was with Her, told me that My Lady had lost no whit of her maidenhood for the Child. Well pleased was I the while this thing lasted me. It seemed me that I saw it like as I do you. Thereafter, methought I saw a Man bound to a stake, in whom was great sweetness and humility, and an evil folk beat Him with scourges and rods right cruelly, so that the blood ran down thereof. They would have no mercy on Him. Of this sight I not hold myself but that I wept for pity of Him. Therewithal I awoke and marvelled much whence it should come and what it might be. But in anyway it pleased me much that I had seen it. It seemed me better this, that I saw the same Man that had been bound to the stake set upon a cross, and nailed thereon right grievously and smitten in the side with a spear, whereof had I such great pity that needs must I weep of the sore pain that I saw Him suffer. I saw the Lady at the feet of the cross, and knew her again that I had seen delivered of the Child, but none might I in writing the great dole that she made. On the other side of the cross was a man that

The seemed not joyful, but he recomforted the Lady Graal the fairest he might. And another folk were there that collected His blood in a most holy Vessel that one of them held for it.

## XXVII

‘Afterward, methought I saw Him take down of hanging on the cross, and set in sepulchre of stone. Thereof had I great pity for, so long as meseemed I saw Him thus never might I withhold me from weeping. And so soon as the pity came into my heart and the tears into my eyes, I had my sight even as you see. In such a Lord as this ought one to believe, for He suffered death when He might lightly have avoided it had He so willed but He did it to save His people. In this Lord I will that ye all believe, and so renounce our false gods, for they be devils and therefore may not aid us nor avail us. And he that will not believe, him will I make be slain or die a shameful death.’ The Lady made her be helped up and baptized, and all them that would not do the same she made be destroyed and banished. This history telleth us that her name was Salubre. She was good lady and well believed in God, and so holy life led she thereafter that in a hermitage she died. Perceval departed from the castle right joyful in his heart of the Lady and her people that believed in the New Law.



## BRANCH XXXIII

### TITLE I

**A**FTERWARD, this title telleth us that Meliot of Meliot of Logres was departed from Logres castle Perilous sound and whole, by virtue of the sword that Lancelot had brought him, and the cloth that he took in the Chapel Perilous. But sore sorrowful was he of the tidings he had heard that Messire Gawain was in prison and he knew not where, but he had been borne in hand that two knights that were kinsmen of them of the Raving Castle that had slain one another, had shut him in prison on account of the prize that had won the castle. Now, saith Meliot of Logres, never shall he have ease again until he knoweth where Messire Gawain is.

He rideth amidst a forest, and prayeth God to send him betimes to hear witting of Messire Gawain. The forest was strange and gloomy. He rode until nightfall but might not find either hold nor hermitage. He looketh right amidst the forest before him and seeth a damsel lying that bemoaneth herself full sore. The moon was dark and the place right foul of stinking and the forest gloomy of shadow. 'Alas, damsel, and what do you here at this hour?' 'Sir,' saith she, 'I may not amend it, for more is my sorrow. For the place is more perilous than you think. Look,' saith she,

Two knights hanging 'up above, and you will see the occasion wherefore I am here.' Meliot looketh and seeth two knights all armed hanging up above the damsel's head. Thereof much marvelleth he. 'Ha, damsel,' saith he, 'Who slew the knights so foully?' 'Sir,' saith she, 'The Knight of the Galley that <sup>haunts</sup> ~~saith~~ in the sea.' 'And wherefore hath he hanged them in such wise?' 'For this,' saith she, 'that I believed in God and His sweet Mother. As so behoveth me to watch them here for many days, that none take them down of hanging for and they were taken hence he would leave his castle, he saith, and would cut off my head.' 'By my head,' saith Meliot, 'Such watch is foul shame to damsel, and no longer shall remain here.' 'Ha, Sir,' saith the damsel, 'Then shall I be a dead woman, for he is so great cruelty that none scarce might prove me against him.'

## II

'Damsel,' saith Meliot, 'Foul shame would it be and I left here these knights in such manner for the reproach of other knights.' Meliot made them graves with his sword, and buried them the best he might. 'Sir,' saith the damsel, 'And you take not thought to protect me, the knight will slay me.' 'Tomorrow, when he findeth not the knights, he will search all the forest to look for Meliot and the damsel together go their way through the forest until they come to a chamber where was wont to be a hermit that the Knight

the Galley had destroyed. He helpeth  
 wn the damsel of his horse, and afterward  
 y entered into the chapel, where was a great  
 ghtness of light, and a damsel was there  
 t kept watch over a dead knight. Meliot  
 rvelleth him much. 'Damsel,' saith Meliot,  
 /hen was this knight killed?' 'Sir, yester-  
 / the Knight of the Galley slew him on the  
 -shore, wherefore behoveth me thus keep  
 tch, and in the morning will he come hither  
 ever he go to the castle where Messire  
 wain hath to-morrow to fight with a lion,  
 unarmed, and my Lady, that is mistress  
 h of me and of this damsel you have brought  
 her, will likewise be brought to-morrow to  
 place where the lion is to slay Messire  
 wain, and she in like sort will be afterward  
 ivered to the lion and she renounce not the  
 w Law wherein the knight that came from  
 ving Castle, whereof she is lady, hath made  
 believe; and we ourselves shall be in like  
 nner devoured along with her. But this  
 nsel would still have taken respite of my  
 th and she had still kept guard over the  
 ghts that were so foully hanged above her.  
 theless, sith that you have taken them down  
 m where they were hanging, you have done a  
 ht good deed, whatsoever betide, for the Lord  
 the Red Tower will give his castle to the  
 ght for this.' Meliot is right joyous of the  
 ings that he hath heard of Messire Gawain  
 t he is still on live, for well knoweth he, sith  
 t the Knight of the Galley will come by the  
 pel there, that he will come thither or ever

Tidings  
 of  
 Gawain

The Messire Gawain doth battle with the  
 Knight 'Sir,' saith the damsel of the chapel, 'I  
 of the God's sake, take this damsel to a place  
 Galley safety, for the knight will be so wood mad  
 wrath and despite so soon as he cometh hither  
 that he will be fain to smite off her head  
 forthwith, and of yourself also have I great  
 fear.'

## III

'Damsel,' saith Meliot, 'The knight is a  
 man like as am I.' 'Yea, Sir, but stronger  
 he and more cruel than seem you to be.' Meliot  
 was in the chapel the night until the morning  
 and heard the knight coming like a tempest,  
 he brought with him the lady of the castle  
 reviled her from time to time, and Meliot  
 him come, and a dwarf that followeth after  
 a great pace. He crieth out to him: 'Behold  
 there the disloyal knight through whom  
 you have lost your castle. Now haste! Away  
 yourself of him! After that will we go to  
 death of Messire Gawain?' Meliot, so soon  
 he espieth him, mounteth and maketh his  
 ready. 'Is it you,' saith the Knight of  
 Galley, 'that hath trespassed on my den  
 and taken down my knights?' 'By my lord  
 yours were they not! Rather were they  
 knights of God, and foul outrage have you  
 herein when you slew them so shamefully.  
 He goeth toward the knight without  
 words, and smiteth him so passing strong as  
 the breast that he pierceth the habergeon  
 thrusteth all the iron of his spear into his

afterward draweth it back to him with a Meliot  
 it wrench. And the knight smiteth him so slayeth  
 d on his shield that he maketh an ell's length him  
 beyond, for right wroth was he that he was  
 mded. The dwarf crieth to him, 'Away,  
 ! The knight endureth against you that  
 e slain so many of them!' The Knight of  
 Galley waxeth wood wrath. He taketh his  
 er, and cometh as fast as his horse may  
 y him, and smiteth Meliot so strongly that  
 breaketh his spear in such sort that he  
 eth both him and his horse stagger. But  
 iot catcheth him better, for he thrusteth the  
 r right through his body and hurleth against  
 at the by-passing with such stoutness and  
 e that he maketh him fall dead to the  
 nd from his horse. The dwarf thought to  
 pe, but Meliot smote off his head, whereof  
 damsels gave him great thanks, for many a  
 hief had he wrought them.

## IV

Meliot buried the knight that he found in the  
 el dead, then told the damsels that he might  
 e no longer, but would go succour Messire  
 rain and he might. The damsels were  
 ed to their will, for one had the horse of  
 knight that was slain and the other the horse  
 he dwarf. The other damsel was come  
 a mule, and they said that they would go  
 , for the country was made all safe by the  
 a of the knight. They thanked Meliot  
 , for they say truly that he hath rescued  
 from death. Meliot departeth from the

Gawain damsels and goeth right amidst the forest at  
 in sore that would most fain hear tidings of Messire  
 peril Gawain. When he had ridden of a long space  
 he met a knight that was coming all armed  
 great pace. 'Sir Knight,' saith he to Meliot, 'Can  
 you tell me tidings of the Knight of the Galley?'  
 'What have you to do therein?' saith Meliot.  
 'Sir, the Lord of the Red Tower hath comen to  
 bring Messire Gawain into a launde of a  
 forest, and there, all unarmed, must he do battle  
 with a lion. So my lord is waiting for the  
 Knight of the Galley, that is to bring the  
 damsels thither that the lion will devour when  
 he shall have slain Messire Gawain.' 'When will  
 the battle be presently?' saith Meliot. 'Yea,  
 Sir,' saith the knight, 'Soon enough betide  
 for Messire Gawain hath already been brought  
 thither and there bound to a stake until such  
 time as the lion shall be come. Then will he  
 be unbound, but even then two knights all armed  
 will keep watch on him. But tell me tidings of  
 the Knight of the Galley, and you have tidings of  
 him?' 'Go forward,' saith he, 'and you shall  
 hear tidings of him.' Meliot departeth then  
 upon, a great gallop, and cometh nigh the launde  
 whereunto Messire Gawain had been brought.  
 He espied the two knights that kept guard on  
 him, and if that Messire Gawain were in there  
 little marvel was it, for he thought that his end  
 was come. Meliot espied him bound to an iron  
 with cords about the body on all sides so that  
 he might not move. Meliot hath great pity thereof  
 in his heart, and saith to himself that he would  
 be there sooner than Messire Gawain shall die.

clappeth spurs to his horse when he cometh  
 nigh the knights, and overtaketh one of them  
 with such a rush that he thrusteth his spear  
 right through his body, and beareth him down  
 dead. The other was fain to go to the castle  
 for succour when he saw his fellow dead.  
 Meliot slew him forthwith. He cometh to  
 Messire Gawain, and so unbindeth him and  
 cutteth the cords wherewith he is bound. 'Sir,'  
 saith he, 'I am Meliot of Logres, your knight.'

Meliot  
 rescueth  
 Gawain

## V

When Messire Gawain felt himself unbound,  
 so need to ask whether he had joy thereof.  
 The tidings were come to the Red Court that  
 Queen Jandree was christened and baptized, and  
 that the Knight was come that had such force and  
 valiance in him that none might endure against  
 him for the God in whom he believed, and they  
 knew likewise that the Knight of the Galley  
 was dead, and Messire Gawain unbound and the  
 knights that guarded him slain. They say that  
 here may they not abide, so they depart from  
 the castle and say that they will cross the sea to  
 protect their bodies, for that there they may  
 have no safety.

## VI

When Meliot had delivered Messire Gawain  
 he made him be armed with the arms, such as  
 they were, of one of the knights he had slain.  
 Messire Gawain mounted on a horse such as  
 pleased him, and right great joy had he at heart.  
 They marvel much how it is that they of the  
 castle have not come after them, but they know

Perceval not their thought nor how they are scared  
 and his 'Meliot,' saith Messire Gawain, 'You be  
 ship delivered me from death this time and  
 other, nor never had I acquaintance with  
 knight that hath done so much for me in  
 short a time as have you.' They departed  
 speediest they might and rode nigh enow to  
 castle, but they heard none moving within,  
 any noise, nor saw they none issue forth,  
 much marvelled they that none should come  
 after them. They rode until they came to  
 head of the forest and caught sight of the  
 that was nigh enough before them, and saw  
 there was a great clashing of arms at the base  
 of the sea. A single knight was doing battle  
 with all them that would fain have entered  
 a ship, and held stour so stiffly against them  
 he toppled the more part into the sea. They  
 went thither as fast as they might, and when  
 they drew nigh to the ship they knew that  
 was Perceval by his arms and his shield.  
 ever they reached it, the ship was put off  
 the midst of the sea, wherein he was launce  
 of his own great hardiment, and they went  
 fighting against him within the ship. 'Meliot,'  
 saith Messire Gawain, 'See you, there  
 Perceval the Good Knight, and now may  
 say of a truth that he is in sore peril of death  
 for that ship, save God bethink Him that  
 shall arrive in such manner and in such a place  
 as that never more shall we have no witting  
 him, and, so he perish for ever, no knight  
 live may have power to set forward the Labour  
 of our Lord.'



## VII

Evil  
tidings  
of  
Lancelot

Messire Gawain seeth the ship going further way, and Perceval that defendeth himself therein against them that set upon him. Right eavy is he that he came not sooner, or ever the ship had put off from the land. He turneth back, he and Meliot together, and right sorrowful was Messire Gawain of Perceval, for they knew not in what land he might arrive, and, might he have followed, right gladly would he have gone after him to aid him. They have ridden until they meet a knight. Messire Gawain asketh him whence he cometh, and he saith from King Arthur's court. 'What tidings can you tell us thereof?' saith Messire Gawain. 'Sir, bad enough!' saith he. 'King Arthur hath neglected all his knights for Briant of the Isles, and hath put one of his best knights in prison.' 'What is his name?' saith Messire Gawain. 'Sir, he is called Lancelot of the Lake. He had reconquered all the islands that had been reft of King Arthur, and slain King Madeglant, and conquered the land of Oriande that he turned to the belief of the Emperour of the World, and, so soon as he had conquered his enemies, King Arthur sent for him forthwith and straightway put him in his prison by the counsel of Briant of the Isles. That King Arthur will have a surfeit of friends in times; for King Claudas hath assembled his folk in great plenty to reconquer the kingdom of Oriande and come back upon King Arthur by the counsel of Briant of the Isles that betrayeth

**Arthur is** the King, for he hath made him his Seneschal;  
**blamed** commander of all his land.' 'Sir Knight,' saith  
Messire Gawain, 'Needs must the King  
carry that setteth aside the counsel of his good  
knights for the leasings of a traitor.' Then  
upon the knight departed from Messire Gawain.  
Right heavy is he of this that he hath said,  
that the King hath put Lancelot in prison. No  
tofore did he aught whereby he wrought  
much to blame.

## BRANCH XXXIV

### TITLE I

**H**EREUPON the story is silent of Messire **Of King**  
Gawain and Meliot, and speaketh of **Claudas**  
King Claudas that hath assembled a great folk  
by the counsel of Briant of the Isles to come  
into the land of King Arthur, for he knoweth  
that it is disgarnished of the good knights that  
wont there to be, and he knoweth all the secret  
plottings of the court and what power King  
Arthur hath withal. He draweth toward his  
land the nighest he may, and hath won back the  
kingdom of Oriande all at his will. But they  
of Albanie still hold against him and challenge  
the land the best they may. Tidings thereof  
come to the court of King Arthur, and they of  
the country send him word that so he send them  
not succour betimes they will yield up the land  
to King Claudas, and oftentimes they long after  
Lancelot, and say that so they had a defender  
like him, the islands would be all at peace.  
The King sent Briant of the Isles thither many  
times, that ever incontinent returned thence dis-  
comfit, but never sent he thither him that should  
have power to protect the land against King  
Claudas. King Arthur was sore troubled, for  
no witting had he of Messire Gawain nor  
Messire Ywain nor of others whereby his court  
had use of right to be feared and dreaded and

Lucan of high renown throughout all other kingdoms  
the King was one day in the hall at Cardoill  
Butler right heavy; and he was at one of the windows  
and remembered him of the Queen and of his  
good knights that he went to see oftener  
court, whereof the more part were dead, and  
of the adventures that went to befall therein  
whereof they saw none no longer. Lucan  
the Butler seeth him right heavy and draweth  
nigh to him quietly.

## II

‘Sir,’ saith he, ‘Meseemeth you are without  
joy.’ ‘Lucan,’ saith the King, ‘Joy hath  
been somewhat far from me sithence that the  
Queen hath been dead, and Gawain and the  
other knights have held aloof from my court  
that they deign come hither no longer. More-  
over, King Claudas warreth upon me and con-  
quereth my lands so that no power have I to  
rescue me for default of my knights.’ ‘Sir,’  
saith Lucan, ‘Herein is there nought whereof  
you have right to accuse any save yourself alone.  
For you have done evil to him that hath served  
you, and good to them that are traitors to you.  
You have one of the best knights in the world  
and the most loyal in your prison, wherefore all  
the other hold them aloof from your court.  
Lancelot had served you well by his good will  
and by his good knighthood, nor never had he  
done you any disservice whereof you might in  
justice have done him such shame; nor never  
will your enemies withhold them from you nor  
have dread of you save only through him and

ther your good knights. And know of a truth **pleadeth**  
 hat Lancelot and Messire Gawain are the best **for**  
 f your court.' 'Lucan,' saith King Arthur, **Lancelot**  
 So thought I ever again to have affiance in  
 him, I would make him be set forth of my  
 prison, for well I know that I have wrought  
 discourteously toward him; and Lancelot is of  
 great heart, wherefore would he not slacken  
 of his despite for that which hath been done  
 unto him until such time as he should be avenged  
 hereof, for no king is there in the world, how  
 puissant soever he be, against whom he durst not  
 well maintain his right.'

## III

'Sir,' saith Lucan, 'Lancelot well knoweth  
 hat and you had taken no counsel but your  
 own, he would not have been thus entreated,  
 and I dare well say that never so long as he  
 veth will he misdo in aught towards you, for  
 e hath in him much valour and loyalty, as  
 many a time have you had good cause to know.  
 Wherefore, and you would fain have aid and  
 accour and hold your realm again, behoveth  
 ou set him forth of the prison, or otherwise  
 ever will you succeed herein, and, if you do  
 ot so, you will lose your land by treason.'  
 The King held by the counsel of Lucan the  
 butler. He made bring Lancelot before him  
 into the midst of the hall, that was somewhat  
 made lean of his being in prison, but he bore  
 him as he wont, nor might none look at him  
 whom he seemed not to be good knight.  
 Lancelot,' saith the King, 'How is it with

Lancelot you?' 'Sir,' saith he, 'It hath been ill with me long time, but, please God, it shall be better hereafter.' 'Lancelot,' saith the King, 'I repent me of this that I have done to you, and I have bethought me much of the good services I have found in you, wherefore I do you amends thereof at your will, in such sort as that the love between us shall be as it was tofore.'

## IV

'Sir,' saith Lancelot, 'Your amends love me much, and your love more than of any other, but never, please God, will I misdo you ought that you may have done to me, for it is well known that I have not been in prison for no treason I have done, nor for no folly, only for that it was your will. Never will I be reproached me as of shame, and, sith that I have done me nought whereof I may be blamed nor reproach, my devoir it is to withhold me from hating you; for you are my lord, and if that you do me ill, without flattery of me, the ill you do me is your own; but, please God, whatsoever you have done me, never shall my aid fail you, rather, everywhere will I put my body in adventure for your love, in such sort as I have done many a time.'

## V

In the court of King Arthur was right great joy of the most part when they heard that Lancelot was set forth of prison, but not

that rejoiced were Briant and his folk. The King commanded that Lancelot should be well treated for and made whole again, and that all should be at his commandment. The court was all overjoyed thereof, and they said: now at last might the King make war in good assurance. Lancelot was foremost in the King's court and more redoubted than was ever another of the knights. Briant of the Isles came one day before the King. 'Sir,' saith he, 'Behold, here is Lancelot that wounded me in your service, wherefore I will that he know I am his enemy.' 'Briant,' saith Lancelot, 'And if that you deserved it tofore, well may you be sorry thereof, and sith that you wish to be mine enemy, your friend will I not be. For well may I deem of your love according as I have found it in you.' 'Sir,' saith Briant to the King, 'You are my lord, and I am one you are bound to protect. You know well that so rich am I in lands and so puissant in friends that I may well despise mine enemy, nor will I not remain at your court so long as Lancelot is herein. Say not that I depart thence with any shame as toward myself. Rather thus go I hence as one that will gladly avenge me, so I have place and freedom, and I see plainly and know that you and your court love him far better than you love me, wherefore behoveth me take thought thereof.' 'Briant,' saith the King, 'Remain as yet, and I will make amends for you to Lancelot, and I myself will make amends for him to you.'

Briant  
fain to  
depart

Briant  
and  
Claudas

## VI

‘Sir,’ saith Briant, ‘By the faith that I o to you, none amends will I have of him i other until such time as I have drawn as m blood of his body as did he of mine, and will well that he know it.’ With that Bri departeth from the court all wrathful, but that Lancelot had not feared to anger King, Briant would not have ridden a lea English or ever he had followed and for him to fight. Briant goeth toward the Ca of the Hard Rock, and saith that better wo it have been for the King that Lancelot w still in prison, for that such a plea will he m against him and he may bring it to bear, as t he shall lose thereof the best parcel of his la He is gone into the land of King Claudas, saith that now at last hath he need of his for Lancelot is issued forth of the Ki prison and is better loved at court than other, so that the King believeth in no cou save his only. King Claudas sweareth to l and maketh pledge that never will he fail h and Briant to him again.



## BRANCH XXXV

### TITLE I

**H**EREWITHAL is the story silent of Perceval Briant and talketh of Perceval, that the ship beareth away right swiftly; but so long with he held battle therein that every one hath slain of them that were in the ship save only the pilot that steereth her, for him hath he in covenant that he will believe in God and renounce his evil Law. Perceval is far from land so that he seeth nought but sea only, and the ship speedeth onward, and God guideth him, as one that believeth in Him and loveth Him and serveth Him of a good heart. The ship ran on by night and by day as it pleased God, until that they saw a castle and an island in the sea. He asked his pilot if he knew what castle it was. 'Certes,' saith he, 'Not I, for so far have we run that I know not neither the sea nor the stars.' They come nigh the castle, and saw four that sounded bells at the four corners of the town, right sweetly, and they that sounded them were clad in white garments. They are come thither.

### II

So soon as the ship had taken haven under the castle, the sea withdraweth itself back, so that the ship is left on dry land. None were

Perceval therein save Perceval, his horse, and the pilot. **seeth** They issued forth of the ship and went by the side of the sea toward the castle, and therein were the fairest halls and the fairest mansions that any might see ever. He looketh underneath a tree that was tall and broad and **seeth** the fairest fountain and the clearest that any may devise, and it was all surrounded of rich pillars, and the gravel thereof seemed to be gold and precious stones. Above this fountain were two men sitting, their beards and hair whiter than driven snow, albeit they seemed young of visage. So soon as they saw Perceval they dressed them to meet him, and bowed down and worshipped the shield that he bare at his neck, and kissed the cross and then the boss wherein were the hallows. 'Sir,' say they, 'Marvel not of this that we do, for we knew we the knight that bare this shield tofore you. Many a time we saw him or ever God were crucified.' Perceval marvelleth much of this that they say, for they talk of a time that is long ago.

## III

'Lords, know ye then how he was named? Say they, 'Joseph of Abarimacie, but no cross was there on the shield before the death of Jesus Christ. But he had it set thereon after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ for the sake of the Saviour that he loved so well.' Perceval took off the shield from his neck, and one of the worshipful men setteth <sup>on it</sup> upon it ~~as it was~~ a posy of herbs that was blooming with the

fairest flowers in the world. Perceval looketh **many**  
beyond the fountain and seeth in a right fair **marvels**  
place a round vessel like as it were ~~ivory~~, and *glass*  
it was so large that there was a knight within,  
all armed. He looketh thereinto and seeth the  
knight, and speaketh to him many times, but  
never the more willeth the knight to answer  
him. Perceval looketh at him in wonderment,  
and cometh back to the good men and asketh  
them who is this knight, and they tell him that  
he may know not as yet. They lead him to  
a great hall and bear his shield before him,  
whereof they make right great joy, and show  
hereunto great worship. He seeth the hall  
right rich, for hall so rich and so fair had he  
seen never. It was hung about with right rich  
cloths of silk, and in the midst of the hall was  
naged the Saviour of the World so as He is in  
His majesty, with the apostles about Him, and  
within were great galleries that were full of  
folk and seemed to be of great holiness, and so  
were they, for had they not been good men  
they might not there have remained.

## VI

‘Sir,’ say the two Masters to Perceval,  
This house that you see here so rich, is the  
all royal.’ ‘By my faith,’ saith Perceval,  
So ought it well to be, for never saw I none  
so much of worth.’ He looketh all around, and  
seeth the richest tables of gold and ivory that  
he saw ever. One of the Masters clappeth his  
hands thrice, and three and thirty men come  
to the hall all in a company. They were clad

**wondrous chain** **A** in white garments, and not one of them but had a red cross in the midst of his breast, and they seemed to be all of an age. As soon as they enter into the hall they do worship to God Our Lord and set out their cups. Then went they to wash at a great laver of gold, and then went to sit at the tables. The Masters made Perceval sit at the most master-table with themselves. They were served thereat right gloriously, and Perceval looked about him more gladlier than he ate.

## V

And while he was thus looking, he seeth a chain of gold come down above him loaded with precious stones, and in the midst thereof was a crown of gold. The chain descended a great length and held on to nought save to the will of Our Lord only. As soon as the Masters saw it descending they opened a great wide pit that was in the midst of the hall, so that one could see the hole all openly. As soon as the entrance of this pit was discovered, there issued thence the greatest cry and most dolorous that any heard ever, and when the worshipful men hear it, they stretched out their hands towards Our Lord and all began to weep. Perceval heareth this dolour, and marvelleth much what it may be. He seeth that the chain of gold descendeth thither and is there stayed until they have well-nigh eaten, and then draweth itself again into the air and so goeth again aloft. But Perceval knoweth not what became thereof, and the Master covereth the pit again, that was right

grisly to see, and pitiful to hear were the voices that issued therefrom.

Perceval  
his  
promise

## VI

The Good Men rose from the tables when they had eaten, and gave thanks right sweetly to Our Lord; and then returned thither whence they had come. 'Sir,' saith the Master to Perceval, 'The chain of gold that you have seen is right precious and the crown of gold likewise. But never may you issue forth from hence save you promise to return so soon as you shall see the ship and the sail crossed of a red cross; otherwise may you not depart hence.' 'Tell me,' saith he, 'of the chain of gold and the crown, what it may be?' 'We will tell you not,' saith one of the Masters, 'save you promise that which I tell you.' 'Certes, Sir,' saith Perceval, 'I promise you faithfully, that so soon as I shall have done that I have to do for my lady my mother and one other, that I will return hither, so I be on live and I see your hip so marked as you say.' 'Yea, be you faithful to the end herein, and you shall have the crown of gold upon your head so soon as you return, and so shall you be seated in the throne, and shall be king of an island that is near to this, right plenteous of all things good, where nought is there in the world that is there lacking that is needful for man's body. King Hermit was the king thereof that thus hath furnished it, and for that he approved himself so well in this kingdom, and that they who are in the island consented thereto, is he chosen to be

Plenteous king of a greater realm. Now they desire t  
 Island another worshipful man be sent them for ki  
 that shall do for them as much good as did  
 but take you good heed, sith that you will  
 king therein, that the island be well garnish  
 for, and you garnish it not well, you will  
 put into the Poverty-stricken Island, the cry  
 whereof you have but now since heard, and  
 crown thereof will again be reft from y  
 For they that have been kings of the Plente  
 Island and have not well approved them,  
 among the folk that you saw in the Pover  
 stricken Island, lacking in all things good. A  
 so I tell you that King Hermit, whom  
 will succeed, hath sent thither a great part  
 his folk. There are the heads sealed in sil  
 and the heads sealed in lead, and the bo  
 whereunto these heads belonged; I tell  
 that you must make come thither the head b  
 of the King and of the Queen. But of  
 other I tell you that they are in the Pover  
 stricken Island. But we know not whet  
 they shall ever issue forth thence.'

## VII

'Sir,' saith Perceval, 'Tell me of the kn  
 that is all armed in the ivory vessel, who h  
~~and what is the name of this castle?~~' 'I  
 may not know,' saith the Master, 'until y  
 return. But tell me tidings of the most F.  
 Graal, that you reconquered, is it still in  
 holy chapel that was King Fisherman'  
 'Yea, Sir,' saith Perceval, 'And the sw

wherewith S. John was beheaded, and other Perceval  
 hallows in great plenty.' 'I saw the Graal,' setteth  
 with the Master, 'or ever Joseph, that was sail  
 uncle to King Fisherman, collected therein the Garbled  
 blood of Jesus Christ. Know that well am I  
 acquainted with all your lineage, and of what  
 folk you were born. For your good knight-  
 hood and for your good cleanness and for your  
 good valour came you in hither, for such was  
 Our Lord's will, and take heed that you be  
 ready when place shall be, and time shall come,  
 and you shall see the ship apparelled.' 'Sir,'  
 with Perceval, 'Most willingly shall I return,  
 nor never would I have sought to depart but for  
 my lady my mother, and for my sister, for  
 never have I seen no place that so much hath  
 pleased me.' He was right well harboured the  
 night within, and in the morning, or ever he  
 departed, heard a holy mass in a holy chapel the  
 fairest that he had seen ever. The Master  
 cometh to him after the mass and bringeth  
 him a shield as white as snow. Afterwards,  
 he saith, 'You will leave me your shield within  
 for token of your coming and will bear this.'  
 'Sir,' saith Perceval, 'I will do your pleasure.'  
 He hath taken leave, and so departeth from the  
 rich mansion, and findeth the ship all apparelled,  
 and heareth sound the bells at his forth-going  
 the same as at his coming. He entereth into  
 the ship and the sail is set. He leaveth the  
 land far behind, and the pilot steereth the ship  
 and Our Lord God guideth and leadeth him.  
 The ship runneth a great speed, for far enough  
 had she to run, but God made her speed as He

A poor would, for He knew the passing great goodness  
castle and worth of the knight that was within.

## VIII

God hath guided and led the ship by day and by night until that she arrived at an island where was a castle right ancient, but it seemed not to be over-rich, rather it showed as had it been of great lordship in days of yore. They cast anchor, and Perceval is come toward the castle and entereth in all armed. He seeth the castle large, and the dwelling-chambers fallen down and the house-place roofless, and he seeth a lady sitting before the steps of an old hall. She rose up as soon as she saw him, but she was right poorly clad. It seemed well by her body and her cheer and her bearing that she was a gentlewoman, and he seeth that two damsel come with her that are young of age and are as poorly clad as is the lady. 'Sir,' saith she to Perceval, 'Welcome may you be. No knight have I seen enter this castle of a long time.' 'Lady,' saith Perceval, 'God grant you joy and honour!' 'Sir,' saith she, 'Need have we thereof, for none scarce have I had this long while past.' She leadeth him into a great ancient hall that was right poorly garnished. 'Sir,' saith she, 'Here will you harbour you the night, and you would take in good part that we may do and you knew the plight of this castle.' She maketh him be unarmed of a servant that was there within, and the damsel come before him and serve him right sweetly. The lady bringeth him a mantle to do on.



ir,' saith she, 'Within are no better garments  
 erewith to show you honour than this.' **The lady**  
**thereof**  
 rceval looketh on the damsels and hath great  
 y of them, for so well shapen were they  
 limb and body as that nature might not have  
 ter fashioned them, and all the beauty that  
 y be in woman's body was in them, and all  
 sweetness and simpleness.

## IX

'Lady,' saith Perceval, 'Is this castle, then,  
 yours?' 'Sir,' saith she, 'So much is all  
 t remaineth to me of all my land, and you  
 there my daughters of whom is it right sore  
 y, for nought have they but what you see,  
 eit gentlewomen are they and of high lineage,  
 their kinsfolk are too far away, and a knight  
 t is right cruel hath reft us of our land  
 ence that my lord was dead, and holdeth a  
 of mine in his prison, whereof I am right  
 rowful, for he is one of the comeliest knights  
 the world. He had not been knight more  
 n four years when he took him, and now  
 y I aid neither myself nor other, but I have  
 rd tell that there is a knight in the land of  
 ales that was the son of Alain li Gros of the  
 lleys of Camelot, and he is the Best Knight  
 the World, and this Alain was brother of  
 obrutus, whose wife was I, and of whom I  
 l my son and these two daughters. This  
 ow I well, that and the Good Knight that  
 o near akin to them were by any adventure  
 come into this island, I should have my son  
 in, and my daughters that are disherited

Perceval's kindred would have their lands again freely, and should I be brought out of sore pain and poverty. I am of another lineage that is far away, for King Ban of Benoic that is dead was mine uncle, but he hath a son that is a right good knight as I have been told, and that and one of these two should come to me in any of these islands right joyous should I be thereof.'

## X

Perceval heareth that the two damsels are his uncle's daughters, and hath great pleasure thereof. 'Lady,' saith he, 'How is he named that is in prison?' 'Sir,' saith she, 'Galobrun, and he that holdeth him in prison is named Gohaz of the Castle of the White Tower.' 'Is his castle near this, Lady?' saith he. 'Sir, there is but an arm of the sea to cross, and in all these islands of the sea is there none that hath any puissance but he only, and assured is he that no dread hath he of any man. For none that is in this land durst offend against him. Sir, one thing hath he bid me do, whereof I am sore grieved, that and I ask him not one of my daughters, he hath sworn his oath that he will reave me of my castle.' 'Lady,' saith Perceval, 'An oath is not always kept. To the two damsels, please God, shall he do no shame, and right heavy am I of that he hath done already, for they were daughters of mine uncle. Alain li Gros was my father and Galobrutus my uncle, and many another good man that now is dead.'

## XI

He  
findeth  
his  
cousin

When the damsels heard this, they kneeled down before him, and began to weep for joy and kiss his hands, and pray him for God's sake have mercy on them and on their brother. And he saith that he will not depart from their land until he hath done all he may. He remaineth the night in the castle and his mariner likewise. The lady made great joy of Perceval, and did him all the honour she might. When the morrow came they showed him the land of the King that had reft them of their land, but the lady could not tell him where her son was in prison. He departeth and cometh back to his ship when he hath taken leave of the lady and the damsels, and right glad was he to know that the damsels were so nigh to him of kin. So he prayeth God grant him that he may be able to give them back their land and bring them out of the poverty wherein they are. He roweth until that he is come under a rock, wherein was a cave at top round and narrow and secure like as it were a little house. Perceval looketh on that side, and seeth a man sitting within. He maketh the ship draw nigh the rock, then looketh and seeth the cutting of a way that went upwards through the rock. He is come forth of the ship and goeth up the little path until he cometh into the little house. He findeth within one of the comeliest knights in the world. He had a ring at his feet and a collar on his neck with a chain whereof the other end was fixed by a staple into a great

**Galobrun**s in prison ledge of the rock. He rose up over against Perceval as soon as he saw him. 'Sir Knight,' saith Perceval, 'You are well made fast.' 'Sir,' that irketh me,' saith the knight; 'Better should I like myself elsewhere than here.' 'You would be right,' saith Perceval, 'For you are in right evil plight in the midst of this sea. Have you aught within to eat or to drink?' 'Sir,' saith he, 'The daughter of the Sick Knight that dwelleth in the island hard by, sendeth me every day in a boat as much meat as I may eat, for she hath great pity of me. The King that hath imprisoned me here hath reft her castles like as he hath those of my lady my mother.' 'May none remove you hence?' 'Sir, in no wise, save he that set me here, for he keepeth with him the key of the lock, and he told me when he departed hence that never more should I issue forth.' 'By my head,' saith Perceval, 'but you shall! And you were the son of Galobrunus, you were the son of mine uncle,' saith Perceval, 'and I of yours, so that it would be a reproach to me for evermore and I left you in this prison.'

## XII

When Galobrunus heareth that he is his uncle's son, great joy hath he thereof. He would have fallen at his feet, but Perceval would not, and said to him, 'Now be well assured, for I will seek your deliverance.' He cometh down from the rock, and so entereth the ship and roweth of a long space. He looketh before him and seeth a right rich island

and a right plenteous, and on the other side he seeth in a little islet a knight that is mounted in a tree  
up in a tall tree that was right broad with many boughs. There was a damsel with him, that had climbed up also for dread of a serpent, great and evil-favoured, that had issued from a hole in a mountain. The damsel seeth Perceval's ship coming, and crieth out to him. 'Ha, Sir,' saith she, 'Come to help this King that is up above, and me that am a damsel!' 'Whereof are you afeard, damsel?' saith Perceval. 'Of a great serpent, Sir,' saith she, 'that hath made us climb up, whereof ought I not to be sorry, for this King hath carried me off from my father's house, and would have done me shame of my body and this serpent had not run upon him.' 'And what is the King's name, damsel?' saith Perceval. 'Sir, he is called Gohaz of the Castle of the Whale. His great land is his own that is so plenteous, and other lands enow that he hath reft of my father and of other.' The King had great shame of this that the damsel told him, and made answer never a word. Perceval understandeth that it was he that held his cousin in prison, and is issued from the ship forthwith, sword drawn. The serpent seeth him, and cometh toward him, jaws yawning, and casteth forth fire and flame in great plenty. Perceval thrusteth his sword right through the gullet. 'Now may you come down,' saith he to the King. 'Sir,' saith he, 'The key of a chain herewith a certain knight is bound hath been taken, and the serpent seized it.' Perceval

**Perceval** rendeth open the throat and findeth the key  
**taketh** forthwith, all red-hot with the fire of the  
**Gohaz** serpent. The King cometh down, that hath  
 no dread of aught, but cometh, rather, as he  
 ought, to thank Perceval of the goodness he  
 had done him, and Perceval seizeth him between  
 his arms and beareth him away to the ship.

## XIII

‘Sir Knight,’ saith Gohaz, ‘Take heed what  
 you do, for I am King of this land.’ ‘There-  
 fore,’ saith Perceval, ‘I do it. For, had it  
 been another I should do it not.’ ‘Ha, Sir,’  
 saith the damsel, ‘Leave me not here to get  
 forth as I may, but help me until that I shall  
 be in the house of my father, the Sick Knight,  
 that is sore grieved on my account.’ Perceval  
 understandeth that it is the damsel of whom  
 Galobrunn spake such praise. He goeth to  
 bring her down from the tree, then bringeth  
 her into the ship, and so goeth back toward the  
 rock where his cousin was. ‘Sir Knight,’ saith  
 Gohaz, ‘Where will you put me?’ ‘I will  
 put you,’ saith he, ‘as an enemy, there, where  
 you have put the son of mine uncle in prison;  
 so shall I avenge me of you, and he also at his  
 will.’ When the King heard this, he was glad  
 thereof not a whit, and the damsel was loath  
 not a whit, whom he had thus disherited.  
 They row until they come to the rock. Perceval  
 issueth forth of the ship, and bringeth Gohaz  
 up maugre his head. Galobrunn seeth him  
 coming and maketh great joy thereof, and  
 Perceval saith to him: ‘Behold here you

mortal enemy! Now do your will of him!' Gal-  
le taketh the key and so looseth him of the  
prisons wherein he was imprisoned.

**Galo-  
bruns  
chaineth  
Gohaz**

## XIV

'Galobrunn,' saith Perceval, 'Now may you  
o your pleasure of your enemy?' 'Sir,' saith  
e, 'Right gladly!' He maketh fast the irons  
n his feet that he had upon his own, and  
fterward setteth the collar on his neck. 'Now  
t him be here,' saith he, 'in such sort and in  
ch prison as he put me; for well I know that  
e will be succoured of none.' After that, he  
ingeth the key into the sea as far as he might,  
d so seemed it to Galobrunn that he well  
enged himself in such wise, and better than if  
e had killed him. Perceval alloweth him  
verything therein at his will. They enter into  
e ship and leave Gohaz all sorrowing on the  
ock, that never thereafter ate nor drank. And  
erceval bringeth his cousin and the damsel,  
d they row until that they come into their  
nd, and Perceval maketh send for all the folk  
King Gohaz and maketh all the more  
owerful do sure homage to Galobrunn and his  
sters in such sort that the land was all at their  
ill. He sojourned there so long as it pleased  
m, and then departed and took leave of the  
msel and Galobrunn, that thanked him much  
r the lands that he had again through him.

## XV

Perceval hath rowed until that he is come  
to a castle that was burning fiercely with a  
great flame, and seeth a hermitage upon the sea

**King** hard by. He seeth the hermit at the door of  
**Hermit's** the chapel, and asketh him what the castle  
**castle** that hath caught fire thus. 'Sir,' saith the  
 hermit, 'I will tell you. Joseus, the son of  
 King Pelles, slew his mother there. Never  
 sithence hath the castle stinted of burning, and  
 I tell you that of this castle and one other will  
 be kindled the fire that shall burn up the world  
 and put it to an end.' Perceval marvelleth  
 much, and knew well that it was the castle of  
 King Hermit his uncle. He departeth thence  
 in great haste, and passeth three kingdoms and  
 saileth by the wastes and deserts on one side  
 and the other of the sea, for the ship ran some-  
 what a-nigh the land. He looketh and seeth  
 an island twelve hermits sitting on the sea-shore.  
 The sea was calm and untroubled, and he made  
 cast the anchor so as to keep the ship steady.  
 Then he saluteth the hermits, and they all bow  
 down to him in answer. He asketh them  
 where have they their repair, and they tell him  
 that they have not far away twelve chapels  
 and twelve houses that surround a grave-yard  
 wherein lie twelve dead knights that we keep  
 watch over. They were all brothers-german  
 and right worshipful men, and none thereof lived  
 more than twelve years knight save one only,  
 and none of them was there but won much land  
 and broad kingdoms from the misbelievers, and  
 they all died in arms; and the name of the  
 eldest was Alain li Gros, and he came into the  
 country from the Valleys of Camelot to avenge  
 his brother Alibans of the Waste City that the  
 Giant King had slain, and he took vengeance.



him thereof, but he died thereafter of a wound that the Giant had given him. 'Sir,' saith one of the hermits, 'I was at his death, but I thought was there he so longed after as a son of his, and he said that his name was Perceval. He was the last of the brothers that died.'

The  
twelve  
tombs

## XVI

When Perceval heard this he had pity hereof, and issued forth of the ship and came to land, and his mariner with him. He prayed the hermits that they would lead him to the graveyard where the knights lay, and gladly did they so. Perceval is come thither and seeth the coffins right rich and fair, and the chapels full fairly dight, and every coffin lay over against the altar in each chapel. 'Lords, which coffin is that of the Lord of Camelot?' 'This, the highest,' say the hermits, 'and the most rich, for that he was eldest of all the brethren.' Perceval kneeleth down before it, then embraceth the coffin and prayeth right sweetly for the soul of his father, and in like manner he went to all the other coffins. He harboured the night with the hermits, and told them that Alain li Gros was his father and all the other his uncles. Right joyous were the hermits for that he was come thither, and the morrow, or ever he departed, he heard mass in the chapel of his father and in the others where he might. He entered into the ship and sped full swift, and so far hath the ship run that he draweth high the islands of Great Britain. He arriveth at the head of a forest under the Red Tower

**The Sick Knight** whereof he had slain the lord, there where Meliot delivered Messire Gawain. He is issued forth of the ship and leadeth forth his horse and is armed, and commendeth the pilot to God. He mounteth on his destrier, all armed, and goeth amidst the land that was well-nigh void of people, for he himself had slain the greater part thereof, albeit he knew it not. He rideth so long, right amidst the country, that he cometh toward evensong to a hold that was in a great forest, and he bethought him that he would go into the hermitage, and he cometh straight into the hold, and seeth a knight lying in the entrance of the gate on a straw mattress, and a damsel sate at the bed's head, of passing great beauty, and held his head on her lap.

## XVII

The knight reviled her from time to time, and said that he would make cut off her head and he had not that he desired to have, for that he was sick. Perceval looked at the lady that held him and served him full sweetly, and deemed her to be a good lady and a loyal. The Sick Knight called to Perceval. 'Sir,' saith he, 'Are you come in hither to harbour?' 'Sir,' saith Perceval, 'So please you, I will harbour here.' 'Then blame me not,' saith the knight, 'of that you shall see me do to my wife.' 'Sir,' saith Perceval, 'Sith that she is yours, you have a right to do your pleasure but in all things ought one to be heedful on one's way.' The knight made him be carried back

into the dwelling, for that he had been in the air and his as long as pleased him, and commandeth his wife wife that she do much honour to the knight that is come to lodge within. 'But take heed,' saith he, 'that you be not seen at the table, but eat, as you are wont, at the squire's table, for, until such time as I have the golden cup I desire, I will not forgo my despite against you.'

## XVIII

Perceval unarmed him. The lady had brought him a surcoat of scarlet for him to do on, and he asked her wherefore her lord reviled her and rebuked her in such sort, and she told him all the story how Lancelot had married her to him, and how her lord ever sithence had dishonoured her. 'Sir,' saith she, 'Now hath he fallen into misease, sithence then, and he hath a brother as sick as he is, and therefore hath Gohaz of the Castle of the Whale reft him of his land, whereof is he right sorry, and my lord hath never been heal since that he heard thereof. And well you know that such folk wax wroth of a little, and are overjoyed when they have a little thing that pleaseth them, for they live always in desire of somewhat. My lord hath heard tell of a cup of gold that a damsel beareth, that is right rich and of greater worth than aught he hath seen this long time, and a knight goeth with the damsel that beareth the cup, and saith that none may have it save he be the Best Knight in the World. My lord hath told me many times, sithence he heard tidings thereof, that never shall the despite he

**An** hath toward me be forgone, until that he shall **assembly** have the cup. But he is so angry withal with his brother that hath lost his land, that I aby it right dear, for I do all his will and yet may I have no fair treatment of him. Howbeit, for no ill that he may do, nor no churlishness that he may say, will I be against him in nought that he hath set his mind on. For I would have him, and I had him, blessed be Lancelot through whom it was so. As much as I loved him in health, so much love I him in his sickness, and more yet, for I desire to deserve that God shall bring him to a better mind.'

## XIX

'Lady,' saith Perceval, 'Great praise ought you to have of this that you say; but you may well tell him of a truth that the sick King his brother hath all his land freely and his daughter, for I was at the reconquering thereof, and know the knight well that gave it back to him. But of the golden cup can I give you no witting.' 'Sir,' saith she, 'The damsel is to bear it to an assembly of knights that is to be held hard by this, under the White Tower. There hath she to give it to the best knight, and him that shall do best at the assembly, and the knight that followeth the damsel is bound to carry it whither he that shall win it may command, and if he would fain it should be given to another rather than to himself.' 'Lady,' saith Perceval, 'Well meseemeth that he who shall win the cup by prize of arms will be right courteous and he send it to you, and God grant that he that

hath it may do you such bounty as you desire.' **at the**  
'Sir,' saith she, 'Methinketh well, so Lancelot **White**  
were there, either he or Messire Gawain, that, **Tower**  
and they won it, so they remembered them of  
me, and knew how needful it were to me, they  
would promise me the cup.' 'Lady,' saith  
Perceval, 'By one of these twain ought you  
well to have it, for greater prize now long since  
have they won.' She goeth to her lord and  
saith to him: 'Sir,' saith she, 'Now may you  
be more joyous than is your wont, for that your  
brother hath his land again all quit. For the  
knight that is within was at the reconquering.'  
The Sick Knight heard her and had great joy  
thereof. 'Go!' saith he to his wife, 'and do  
great honour to the knight, but take heed you  
sit not otherwise than you are wont.' 'Sir,'  
saith she, 'I will not.'

## XX

The damsel maketh Perceval sit at meat.  
When he had washen, he thought that the lady  
should have come to sit beside him, but she  
would not disobey her lord's commandment.  
When Perceval was set at the table and he had  
been served of the first meats, thereupon the lady  
went to sit with the squires. Perceval was much  
shamed that she should sit below, but he was not  
minded to speak, for she had told him somewhat  
of her lord's manner. Howbeit, he lay the  
night in the hold, and, on the morrow when he  
had taken leave, he departed, and bethought  
him in his courage that the knight would do  
good chivalry and great alms that should do this

**The sick knight his desire as concerning the cup, in  
Damsel such sort as that his wife should be freed of the  
of the annoy that she is in, for that all knights that knew  
Car thereof ought to have pity of her. Perceval  
goeth his way as he that hath great desire to  
accomplish that he hath to do, and to see the  
token of his going again to the castle where the  
chain of gold appeared to him, for never yet  
saw he dwelling that pleased him so much.  
He hath ridden so far that he is come into the  
joyless forest of the Black Hermit, that is so  
loathly and horrible that no leaves nor greenery  
are there by winter nor by summer, nor was  
song of bird never heard therein, but all the land  
is gruesome and burnt, and wide are the cracks  
therein. He hath scarce gone thereinto or ever  
he hath overtaken the Damsel of the Car, that  
made full great joy of him. ‘Sir,’ saith she,  
‘Bald was I the first time I saw you; now  
may you see that I have my hair.’ ‘Certes,  
yea!’ saith Perceval, ‘And, as methinketh, hair  
passing beautiful.’ ‘Sir,’ saith she, ‘I was wont  
to carry my arm at my neck in a scarf of gold  
and silk, for that I thought the service I did  
you in the hostel of King Fisherman your uncle  
had been ill bestowed; but now well I see that  
it was not; wherefore now carry I the one arm  
in the same manner as the other; and the damsel  
that wont to go a-foot now goeth a-horseback;  
and blessed be you that have so approved you  
in goodness by the good manner of your heart,  
and by your likeness to the first of your lineage,  
whom you resemble in all good conditions.  
Sir,’ saith she, ‘I durst not come nigh the**

castle, for there be archers there that shoot so sore that none may endure their strokes, and hereof will they stint not, they say, until such time as you be come thither. But well know I wherefore they will cease then, for they will come to shut you up within to slay and to destroy. Natheless all they that are within will have no power, nor will they do you evil, save only the lord of the castle; but he will do battle against you right gladly.'

Black  
Hermit's  
Castle

## XXI

Perceval goeth toward the castle of the Black Hermit, and the Damsel of the Car after. The archers draw and shoot stoutly. Perceval goeth forward a great gallop, but they know him not on account of the white shield. They think rather that it is one of the other knights, and they lodge many arrows in his shield. He came nigh a drawbridge over a moat right broad and foul and horrible, and the bridge was lowered so soon as he came, and all the archers left of shooting. Then knew they well that it was Perceval who came. The door was opened to receive him, for they of the gate and they of the castle within thought to have power to slay him. But so soon as they saw him, they lost their will thereof and were all amated and without strength, and said that they would set this business on their lord that was strong enough and puissant enough to slay one man. Perceval entered all armed into a great hall, and found it filled all around with a great throng of folk that

**Black** was right foul to look on. He that was called  
**Hermit's** the Black Hermit was full tall and seemed to  
**foul** be of noble lordship, and he was in the midst of  
**death** the hall, all armed. 'Sir,' say his men, 'And  
you have not defence of yourself, never no  
counsel nor aid may you have of us !

## XXII

'We are yours to guard, to protect, and oftentimes have we defended you ; now defend us in this sore need.' The Black Hermit sate upon a tall black horse, and was right richly armed. So soon as Perceval espieth him, he cometh with such a rush against him that he maketh all the hall resound, and the Black Hermit cometh in like sort. They mell together with such force that the Black Hermit breaketh his spear upon Perceval, but Perceval smiteth him so passing stoutly on the left side upon the shield, that he beareth him to the ground beside his horse, so that in the fall he made he to-frushed two of the great ribs in the overturn. And when they that were therein saw him fall, they opened the trap-door of a great pit that was in the midst of the hall. So soon as they had opened it, the foulest stench that any smelt ever issued thereout. They take their lord and cast him into this abysm and this filth. After that, they come to Perceval, and so yield the castle and put them at his mercy in everything. Thereupon, behold you, the Damsel of the Car that cometh. They deliver up to her the heads sealed in gold, both



the head of the King and of the Queen, and she departeth forthwith, for well knoweth she that Perceval will achieve that he hath to do without her. She departeth from the castle and goeth the speediest she may toward the Valleys of Camelot. And all they of the castle that had been the Black Hermit's are obedient to Perceval to do his will, and they gave him in covenant that never more shall knights be harassed there in such sort as they had been theretofore, but rather that they should receive gladly any knights that should pass that way, like as in other places. Perceval departed from the castle rejoicing for that he had drawn them to the believe of Our Lord, and every day was His service done therein in only wise, like as it is done in other places.

## XXIII

Hereof ought the good knight to be loved that by the goodness of his heart and the valty of his knighthood hath achieved all the nprises he undertook, without reproach and without blame. Perceval hath ridden until he hath overtaken the damsel that carried the rich up of gold and the knight that was along with r. Perceval saluteth him, and the knight maketh answer, may he be blessed of God d of His sweet Mother. 'Fair Sir,' saith erceval, 'Is this damsel of your company?' ith the knight, 'Rather am I of hers. But e are going to an assembly of knights that is be under the White Tower to the intent to

**Perceval** prove which knight is most worth, and to him  
**winneth** that shall have the prize of the assembly shall  
be delivered this golden cup.' 'By my head,'  
saith Perceval, 'That will be fair to see!' He  
departeth from the knight and the damsel,  
and goeth his way a great pace amidst the  
meadows under the White Tower, whither  
the knights were coming from all parts, and  
many of them were already armed to issue  
forth. So soon as it was known that the  
damsel with the cup was come thither, the  
fellowships assembled on all sides, and great was  
the clashing of arms. Perceval hurleth into  
the assembly in such sort that many a knight  
he smiteth down and overthroweth at his  
coming, and he giveth so many blows and so  
many receiveth that all they that behold marvel  
much how he may abide. The assembly lasted  
until evensong, and when it came to an end the  
damsel came to the knights and prayed and  
required that they would declare to her the  
right judgment of arms which had done the  
best. The more part said that he of the white  
shield had surpassed them all in arms, and  
agreed thereto. The damsel was right glad  
for well she knew that they spake truth. She  
cometh to Perceval; 'Sir,' saith she, 'I present  
you this cup of gold for your good chivalry  
and therefore is it meet and right you should  
know whence the cup cometh. The elder  
Damsel of the Tent where the evil custom was  
wont to be, sent it to Messire Gawain, and  
Messire Gawain made much joy thereof. And  
it came to pass on such wise that Brundans,

on of the sister of Briant of the Isles, slew the  
Meliot of Logres, the most courteous knight golden  
and the most valiant that was in the realm of cup  
Logres, and thereof was Messire Gawain so  
sorrowful that he knew not how to contain  
himself. For Meliot had twice rescued him  
from death, and King Arthur once. He was  
fegeman of Messire Gawain. Wherefore he  
sayeth and beseecheth you on his behalf that  
you receive not the cup save you undertake to  
venge him. For he was loved of all the  
court, albeit he had haunted it but little.  
Brundans slew him in treason when Meliot  
was unawares of him.' 'Damsel,' saith Perceval,  
Were there no cup at all, yet natheless should  
be fain to do the will of Messire Gawain, for  
ever might I love the man that had deserved  
hatred.' He taketh the cup in his hand.  
'Damsel,' saith he, 'I thank you much hereof,  
and God grant I may reward you for the same.'  
'Sir,' saith she, 'Brundans is a right proud  
knight, and beareth a shield party of vert and  
argent. He is minded never to change his  
guise, for that his father bore the same.'  
Perceval called the knight that was of the  
Damsel's company. 'I beseech you,' saith he,  
'for guerdon and of service, that you bear this  
for me to the hold of the Sick Knight, and  
his wife that the Knight of the White  
eld that was harboured there within hath  
it her by you.' 'Sir,' saith the knight,  
his will I do gladly to fulfil your will.' He  
taketh the cup to furnish out the conditions  
of the message, and so departeth forthwith.

Of Castle  
Perilous

## XXIV

Perceval lay the night in the castle of the White Tower, and departed thence on the morrow as he that would fain do somewhat whereof he might deserve well of Messire Gawain. Many a time had he heard tell of Meliot of Logres and of his chivalry and of his great valour. He was entered into a forest and had heard mass of a hermit, from whom he had departed. He came to the Castle Perilous that was hard by there where Meliot lay sick and lay wounded, when Lancelot brought him the sword and the cloth wherewith he touched his wounds. He entered into the castle and alighted. The damsel of the castle, that made great dole, came to meet Perceval. 'Damsel saith he, 'Wherefore are you so sorrowful?' 'Sir,' saith she, 'For a knight that I tended and healed herewithin, whom Brundans had killed in treason, and God thereof grant vengeance yet, for so courteous knight saw never.' While she was speaking in this manner forthwith behold you a damsel that cometh. 'Ha, Sir!' saith she to Perceval, 'Mount ye again and come to aid us, for none other knight find I in this land nor in this forest but only you all alone!' 'What need have you of aid?' saith Perceval. 'A knight is carrying off my lady by force, that was going to the court of King Arthur.' 'Who is your lady?' saith Perceval. 'Sir, she is the young Damsel of the Tent where Messire Gawain overthrew the evil customs. For God's sake

ten you, for he revileth her sore for her love the King and of Messire Gawain.' Perceval mounteth forthwith and issueth forth of the tle on the spur. The damsel bringeth him as fast as the knight can go. They had not len far before they came a-nigh, and Perceval rd the damsel crying aloud for mercy, and knight said that mercy upon her he would have, and so smote her on the head and k with the flat of his sword.

## XXV

Perceval espied the knight and saw that the nissance of his shield was such as that which been set forth to him. 'Sir,' saith he, 'so churlishly are you entreating this damsel! at wrong hath she done you?' 'What is you of me and of her?' 'I say it,' saith ceval, 'for that no knight ought to do lishly to damsel.' 'He will not stint for yet!' saith Brundans. He raiseth his d and dealeth the damsel a buffet with the so passing heavy that it maketh her stoop al so that the blood rayeth out at mouth nose. 'By my head,' saith Perceval, 'On buffet I defy thee, for the death of Meliot for the shame you have done this damsel.' 'ther you nor none other may brag that you heart to attack me, but you shall aby it dear!' 'That shall you see presently,' Perceval, and so draweth back the better : drive at him, and moveth towards him as as his horse may run, and smiteth him so g sore that he pierceth his shield and

Brundans  
boasteth

**Perceval** bursteth his habergeon and then thrusteth  
**slayeth** spear into his body with such force that  
**Brundans** overthroweth him all in a heap, him and  
 horse, in such sort that he breaketh both  
 in the fall. Then he alighteth over him  
 lowereth his coif, unlaceth the ventail, and  
 smiteth off his head. 'Damsel,' saith  
 'Take it, I present it to you. And, sith  
 you are going to King Arthur's court, I pray  
 and beseech you that you carry it thither  
 so salute him first for me, and tell Messire  
 Gawain and Lancelot that this is the  
 present I look ever to make them, for I shall  
 never to see them more. Howbeit, where  
 soever I may be, I shall be their well-wisher  
 nor may I never withdraw me of my love,  
 I would fain I might make them the  
 present of the heads of all their enemies,  
 that I may do nought against God's will.  
 The damsel giveth him thanks for that he  
 delivered her from the hands of the knight  
 and saith that she shall praise him much then  
 to the King and Messire Gawain. She goeth  
 her way and carrieth off the head, and Perceval  
 biddeth her to God. He returned back to  
 Castle Perilous, and the damsel made great  
 thereof when she understood that he had  
 Brundans. Perceval lay there that night,  
 departed on the morrow after that he  
 heard mass. When he came forth of the  
 castle he met the knight by whom he  
 sent the cup to the Sick Knight's chamber.  
 Perceval asketh how it is with him. 'I  
 saith he, 'I have carried on your mes-

ight well, for never was a thing received with Perceval  
 uch good will. The Sick Knight hath for- at  
 one his grudge against his wife. She eateth Camelot  
 t his table, and the household do her com-  
 mandment.' 'This liketh me right well,'  
 ith Perceval, 'and I thank you of doing this  
 rand.' 'Sir,' saith the knight, 'No thing is  
 ere I would not do for you, for that you  
 ade my brother Knight Hardy there where  
 ou first saw him Knight Coward.' 'Sir,'  
 ith Perceval, 'Good knight was your brother  
 d a right good end he made, but a little it  
 orthinketh me that he might have still been  
 ring had he abided in his cowardize.' 'Sir,'  
 ith he, 'Better is he dead, sith that he  
 ed with honour, than that he should live with  
 ame. Yet glad was I not of his death, for a  
 urdy knight he was, and yet more would have  
 en, had he lived longer.'

## XXVI

Perceval departeth from the knight and  
 commendeth him to God. He hath wandered  
 far one day and another that he is returned  
 his own most holy castle, and findeth therein  
 his mother and his sister that the Damsel of  
 the Car had brought thither. The Widow  
 lady had made bear thither the body that lay  
 the coffin before the castle of Camelot in  
 the rich chapel that she had builded there.  
 his sister brought the cere-cloth that she took  
 the Waste Chapel, and presented there where  
 the Graal was. Perceval made bring the coffin  
 the other light that was at the entrance of

**The Graal departeth** his castle, within the chapel likewise, and placed it beside the coffin of his uncle, nor never thereafter might it be removed. Josephus telleth that Perceval was in this castle long time, never once moved therefrom in quest of adventure; rather was his courage so attuned to the Saviour of the World and His sweet Mother, that he and his sister and the daughter that was therein led a holy life and a religion. Therein abode they even as it pleased God until that his mother passed away and his sister and all they that were therein save he alone. The hermits that were nigh the castle built them and sang their masses, and came every day and took counsel of him for the holiness they saw him do and the good life that he led there. So one day whilst he was in the chapel where the hallows were, forthwith, behold you, a Voice that cometh down there, 'Perceval,' saith the Voice, 'Not long shall you abide herein; wherefore is it God's will that you dispart the hallows amongst the hermits of the forest, there where these books shall be served and worshipped, and the Holy Graal shall appear herein no more, within a brief space shall you know well the place where it shall be.' When the Voice departed, all the coffins that were there crashed so passing loud that it seemed the master-hall had fallen. He crossed himself, blessed him and commendeth him to God. On a day the hermits came to him. He divided the holy relics among them, and he builded above them holy churches and he



of religion that are seen in the lands and in the Perceval  
 lands. Joseus, the son of King Hermit, saileth  
 remained therein with Perceval, for he well forth  
 knew that he would be departing thence be-  
 times.

## XXVII

Perceval heard one day a bell sound loud  
 and high without the manor toward the sea.  
 He came to the windows of the hall and saw  
 the ship come with the white sail and the Red  
 Cross thereon, and within were the fairest folk  
 that ever he might behold, and they were all  
 habed in such manner as though they should  
 be a mass. When the ship was anchored under  
 the hall they went to pray in the most holy  
 chapel. They brought the richest vessels of  
 gold and silver that any might ever see, like  
 as it were coffins, and set therein one of the  
 three bodies of knights that had been brought  
 into the chapel, and the body of King Fisher-  
 man, and of the mother of Perceval. But no  
 flavour in the world smelleth so sweet. Perceval  
 took leave of Joseus and commended him to  
 the Saviour of the World, and took leave of  
 the household, from whom he departed in like  
 manner. The worshipful men that were in the  
 ship signed them of the cross and blessed them  
 likewise. The ship wherein Perceval was drew  
 far away, and a Voice that issued from the  
 manor as she departed commended them to God  
 and to His sweet Mother. Josephus recordeth  
 that Perceval departed in such wise, nor  
 ever thereafter did no earthly man know what

Perceval's holy chapel became of him, nor doth the history speak of him more. But the history telleth us that Joseus abode in the castle that had been King Fisherman's, and shut himself up therein so that none might enter, and lived upon that the Lord God might send him. He dwelt there long time after that Perceval had departed, and ended therein. After his end, the dwelling began to fall. Natheless never was the chapel wasted nor decayed, but was as whole thereafter as tofore and is so still. The place was far from folk, and the place seemed withal to be somewhat different. When it was fallen into decay, many folk of the lands and islands that were nighest thereunto marvel them what might be in this manor. They dare a many that they should go see what was therein, and sundry folk went thither from all the lands, but none durst never enter there again save two Welsh knights that had heard tell of it. Full comely knights they were, young and joyous-hearted. So each pledged him to other that they would go thither by way of gay adventure; but therein remained they of a long space after, and when again they came forth they led the life of hermits, and clad them in hair shirts, and went by the forest and so ate nought save roots only, and led a right hard life; yet ever they made as though they were glad, and if that any should ask where they rejoiced in such-wise, 'Go,' said they to them that asked, 'thither where we have been, and you shall know the wherefore.' The such sort made they answer to the folk. The two knights died in this holy life, nor were no

ther tidings never brought thence by them. The  
 they of that land called them saints. Book  
 of the  
 Graal

## XXVIII

Here endeth the story of the most Holy  
 Graal. Josephus, by whom it is placed on  
 record, giveth the benison of Our Lord to all  
 that hear and honour it. The Latin from  
 whence this history was drawn into Romance  
 was taken in the Isle of Avalon, in a holy  
 house of religion that standeth at the head of  
 the Moors Adventurous, there where King  
 Arthur and Queen Guenievre lie, according to  
 the witness of the good men religious that are  
 therein, that have the whole history thereof,  
 from the beginning even to the end. After  
 this same history beginneth the story how Briant  
 of the Isles renounced King Arthur on account  
 of Lancelot whom he loved not, and how he  
 assured King Claudas that reft King Ban of  
 the enoic of his land. This story telleth how he  
 conquered him and by what means, and how  
 Galobrus of the Red Launde came to King  
 Arthur's court to help Lancelot, for that he  
 was of his lineage. This story is right long  
 and right adventurous and weighty, but the  
 book will now forthwith be silent thereof until  
 other time.

## The Author's Conclusion

For the Lord of Neele made the Lord of  
 Ambrein this book be written, that never tofore  
 was treated in Romance but one single time

The besides this ; and the book that was made tofore  
worth this is so ancient that only with great pains may  
of this one make out the letter. And let Messire  
book Johan de Neele well understand that he ought to  
hold this story dear, nor ought he tell nought  
thereof to ill-understanding folk, for a good  
thing that is squandered upon bad folk is never  
remembered by them for good.

### Explicit

the Romance of Perceval the nephew of  
King Fisher.

## NOTE

*This ancient 'Book of the Holy Graal,' a valuable addition to our English Arthurian literature, has been translated from the Old French by Dr. Sebastian Evans. In his 'Epilogue' the Translator summarises the literary history of the book, and indicates his strikingly original and noteworthy theory as to the origin of the work. Whether his views be ultimately accepted or rejected by Arthurian scholars, Dr. Evans's able rendering of the old-world romance will long be treasured by students for its intrinsic merits. Publisher and Editor desire to thank him for generously placing his version at their disposal for inclusion in the present Series. They are also to thank Sir Edward Burne-Jones for enriching the volumes with the embellishments of frontispieces and tail-pages.*

I. G.

*Feb. 14th, 1898.*



## THE TRANSLATOR'S EPILOGUE

THIS Book is translated from the first volume **The**  
of *Perceval le Gallois ou le conte du Graal*; **MSS**  
edited by M. Ch. Potvin for 'La Société  
des Bibliophiles Belges' in 1866,<sup>1</sup> from the ms.  
numbered 11,145 in the library of the Dukes  
of Burgundy at Brussels. This ms. I find thus  
described in M. F. J. Marchal's catalogue of  
that priceless collection: '*Le Roman de Saint*  
*Graal*, beginning *Ores lestoires*, in the French  
language; date, first third of the sixteenth  
century; with ornamental capitals.'<sup>2</sup> Written  
three centuries later than the original romance,  
and full as it is of faults of the scribe, this  
manuscript is by far the most complete known  
copy of the Book of the Graal in existence,  
being defective only in Branch XXI. Titles 8  
and 9, the substance of which is fortunately  
reserved elsewhere. Large fragments, how-  
ever, amounting in all to nearly one-seventh of

<sup>1</sup> 6 vols. 8vo. Mons, 1866-1871.

<sup>2</sup> Marchal *Cat.*, 2 vols. Brussels, 1842. Vol. i.  
. 223.

**M. Potvin's edition** the whole, of a copy in handwriting of the thirteenth century, are preserved in six consecutive leaves and one detached leaf bound up with a number of other works in a ms. numbered 113 in the City Library at Berne. The volume is in folio on vellum closely written in three columns to the page, and the seven leaves follow the last poem contained in it, entitled *Duremart le Gallois*. The manuscript is well known, having been lent to M. de Sainte Palaye for use in the Monuments of French History issued by the Benedictines of the Congregation of St. Maur. Selections from the poems it contains are given in Sinner's *Extraits de Poésie du XIII. Siècle*,<sup>1</sup> and it is described, unfortunately without any reference to these particular leaves, by the same learned librarian in the *Catalogus Codicum mss. Bibl. Bernensis*. J. R. Sinner.<sup>2</sup>

M. Potvin has carefully collated for his edition all that is preserved of the Romance in this manuscript, comprising all the beginning of the work as far as Branch III. Title 8, about the middle, and from Branch XVIII. Title 23, near the beginning, to Branch XIX. Title 5, in the middle. Making allowance for variations

<sup>1</sup> Lausanne, 1759.

<sup>2</sup> 3 vols. 8vo. Berne, 1770, etc. Vol. ii., Introduction viii and p. 389 *et seq.*



f spelling and sundry minor differences of **Date**  
 reading, by no means always in favour of the **of the**  
 earlier scribe, the Berne fragments are identical **Romance**  
 with the corresponding portions of the Brussels  
 manuscript, and it is therefore safe to assume  
 that the latter is on the whole an accurate  
 manuscript of the entire original Romance.

The only note of time in the book itself is  
 contained in the declaration at the end. From  
 this it appears that it was written by order of  
 the Seingnor of Cambrein for Messire Jehan  
 the Seingnor of Neele. M. Potvin, without  
 giving any reason for so doing, assumes that  
 this Lord of Cambrein is none other than the  
 Bishop of Cambrai. If this assumption be  
 correct, the person referred to was probably  
 either John of Béthune, who held the see from  
 1200 till July 27, 1219, or his successor  
 Godfrey of Fontaines (Condé), who held it  
 till 1237. To me, however, it seems more  
 likely that the personage intended was in reality  
 the 'Seingnor' of Cambrin, the chef-lieu of a  
 fief of the same name, on a small hill over-  
 looking the peat-marshes of Béthune, albeit I  
 can find no other record of any such landed  
 proprietor's existence.

Be this as it may, the Messire Jehan,  
 seingnor of Neele, can hardly be other than  
 the John de Nesle who was present at the

**The Welsh translation** The battle of Bouvines in 1214, and who in 1225 sold the lordship of Bruges to Joan of Flanders.<sup>1</sup> These dates therefore may be regarded as defining that of the original Romance within fairly narrow limits.

This conclusion is confirmed by other evidence. An early Welsh translation of the story was published with an English version and a glossary by the Rev. Robert Williams in the first volume of his *Selections from the Hengwrt mss.*<sup>2</sup> The first volume of this work is entitled *Y Seint Greal, being the adventures of King Arthur's knights of the Round Table, in the quest of the Holy Grail, and on other occasions. Originally written about the year 1200.* The volume, following the manuscript now in the library of W. W. E. Wynne, Esq., at Peniarth, is divided into two parts. The first, fol. 1-109 of the manuscript, represents the thirteenth to the seventeenth book of Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte D'Arthur*. Of the second, which represents the Romance here translated, Mr. Williams writes: 'The second portion of the Welsh Greal, folios 110-280, contains the adventures of Gwalchmei Peredur and Lancelot, and of the knights of the Round Table;

<sup>1</sup> Rigord. *Chron.* 196, p. 288. Wm. le Breton, *Phil.* xi. 547. See also Birch-Hirschfeld, *Die Gralsage*, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> 2 vols. 8vo. London, Richards, 1876-1892.

but these are not found in the *Morte D'Arthur*. **Defects of the Welsh**  
 The Peniarth ms. is beautifully written on vellum, and in perfect preservation, and its date is that of Henry vi., the early part of the fifteenth century. The orthography and style of writing agrees literally with that of the Mabinogion of the Llyvr Côch Hergest, which is of that date. This, of course, is a transcript of an earlier copy; but there is no certainty when it was first translated into Welsh, though Aneurin Owen in his Catalogue of the Hengwrt mss. assigns it to the sixth year of Henry i. It is mentioned by Davydh ab Gwilym, who died in 1368.'

Whatever may be the date of the Welsh version, the translator had no great mastery of French, and is often at fault as to the meaning both of words and sentences, and when in a difficulty is only too apt to cut the knot by omitting the passage bodily. The book itself, moreover, is not entire. On page 275, all between Branch ix. Title 16 and Branch xi. Title 2, twenty-two chapters in all, is missing. Again, on page 355, Titles 10-16 in Branch xxi. are left out, while the whole of the last Branch, containing 28 Titles, is crumpled up into one little chapter, from which it would seem that the Welshman had read the French, but thought it waste of pains to translate it. In all,

**The Welsh names** not to speak of other defects, there are fifty-six whole chapters in the present book, of which there is not a word in the Welsh.

In one matter, however, Mr. Williams's English translation has stood me in good stead. In Branch **xxi.**, as I have said, the French manuscript makes default of two Titles, but almost the whole of their substance is supplied by the Welsh version. By an unlucky accident, before the hiatus in the French is fully filled up, the Welsh version itself becomes defective, though the gap thus left open can hardly extend beyond a very few words. Without this supplement, incomplete as it is, it would have been impossible to give the full drift of one of the Romancer's best stories, which is equally unintelligible in both the French and Welsh texts in their present state.

As the Welsh version gives a number of names both of persons and places widely differing from those in the French, it may be useful here to note the principal changes made. Perceval in the Welsh is called Peredur, which is said to mean *steel suit*. The Welshman, however, adds that the name in French is *Peneffresvo Galief*, which, unless it be a misreading or miswriting for Perceval le Galois, is to me wholly unintelligible. Perceval's father, Alain li Gros, is in the Welsh Earl

Evrawg, and his sister Dindrane, Danbrann. **An ill-sorted union**  
 King Arthur is Emperor Arthur, his Queen  
 Guenievre, Gwenhwyvar, and their son Lohot,  
 Lohawt or Llacheu. Messire Gawain is  
 Gwalchmei; Chaus, son of Ywain li Aoutres,  
 Gawns, son of Owein Vrych; Messire Kay or  
 Kex is Kei the Long; Ahuret the Bastard,  
 Anores; Ygerne, wife of Uther Pendragon,  
 Eigyr; Queen Jandree, Landyr; and King  
 Fisherman for the most part King Peleur. Of  
 places, Cardoil is Caerlleon on Usk, Pannenois-  
 sance, Penvoisins; Tintagel, Tindagoyl; and  
 Avalon, Avallach.

By a double stroke of ill-luck, the complete and wholly independent Romance here translated has thus been printed by its two former editors as if it were only a part of some other story. M. Potvin describes it as the 'First Part, the Romance in Prose,' of his *Perceval le Gallois*, and Mr. Williams accepts it as the 'Second Portion' of his *Y Seint Greal*. This unhappy collocation has led not a few of M. Potvin's readers to neglect his First Part, under the impression that the story is retold in the other volumes containing the Romance in verse; while not a few of Mr. Williams's readers have neglected his Second Portion under the impression that there could be nothing of any special importance in an adjunct referred to by the

**Fulke Fitz-Warine** Editor in so perfunctory a manner. In very truth, however, the Story of the Holy Graal here told is not only the most coherent and poetic of all the many versions of the Legend, but is also the first and most authentic.

This seems to be proved beyond doubt by a passage in the History of Fulke Fitz-Warine, originally written apparently between the years 1256 and 1264. The passage occurs at the end of the History, and is printed in verse of which I give a literal prose translation.

‘Merlin saith that in Britain the Great a Wolf shall come from the White Launde. Twelve sharp teeth shall he have, six below and six above. He shall have so fierce a look that he shall chase the Leopard forth of the White Launde, so much force shall he have and great virtue. We now know that Merlin said this for Fulke the son of Waryn, for each of you ought to understand of a surety how in the time of the King Arthur that was called the White Launde which is now named the White Town. For in this country was the chapel of S. Austin that was fair, where Kahuz, the son of Ywein, dreamed that he carried off the candlestick and that he met a man who hurt him with a knife and wounded him in the side. And he, on sleep, cried out so loud that King Arthur hath heard him and awakened from sleep. And

Story of  
Chaus

when Kahuz was awake, he put his hand to his side. There hath he found the knife that had smitten him through. So TELLETH US THE GRAAL, THE BOOK OF THE HOLY VESSEL. There the King Arthur recovered his bounty and his valour when he had lost all his chivalry and his virtue. From this country issued forth the Wolf as saith Merlin the Wise, and the twelve sharp teeth have we known by his shield. He bore a shield indented as the heralds have devised. In the shield are twelve teeth of gules and argent. By the Leopard may be known and well-understood King John, for he bore in his shield the leopards of beaten gold.' <sup>1</sup>

The story of Kahuz or Chaus here indicated by the historian is told at length in the opening chapters of the present work and, so far as is known, nowhere else. The inference is therefore unavoidable that we have here 'The Graal, the Book of the Holy Vessel' to which the biographer of Fulke refers. The use, more-

<sup>1</sup> *L'histoire de Foulkes Fitz-Warin*. Ed. F. Michel, Paris, 1840; p. 110. Ed. T. Wright (Warton Club), London, 1855; p. 179. Ed. J. Stevenson (*Rolls Publication* of R. Coggeshall), London, 1875; p. 412. The MS. containing the history (*MS. Reg. 12. c. xii.*) was first privately printed for the late Sir T. Duffus Hardy from a transcript by A. Berbrugger.

The over, of the definite article shows that the  
 trouveur writer held this book to be conclusive authority  
 Sarrazin on the subject. By the time he retold the story  
 of Fulke, a whole library of Romances about  
 Perceval and the Holy Graal had been written,  
 with some of which it is hard to believe that  
 any historian of the time was unacquainted.  
 He nevertheless distinguishes this particular  
 story as 'The Graal,' a way of speaking he  
 would scarce have adopted had he known of  
 any other 'Graals' of equal or nearly equal  
 authority.

Several years later, about 1280, the trouveur  
 Sarrazin also cites 'The Graal' (*li Graaus*) in  
 the same manner, in superfluous verification of  
 the then accepted truism that King Arthur was  
 at one time Lord of Great Britain. This  
 appeal to 'The Graal' as the authority for a  
 general belief shows that it was at that time  
 recognised as a well-spring of authentic know-  
 ledge; while the fact that the trouveur was not  
 confounding 'The Graal' with the later version  
 of the story is further shown by his going on  
 presently to speak of 'the Romance that  
 Chrestien telleth so fairly of Perceval—the  
 adventures of the Graal.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Le Roman de Ham,' in the Appendix to F. Michel's  
*Histoire des Ducs de Normandie*. Soc. de l'Hist. de France  
 1840, pp. 225, 230.



Perhaps, however, the most striking testimony to the fact that this work is none other than the original Book of the Graal is to be found in the Chronicle of Helinand, well known at the time the Romance was written not only as a historian but as a troubadour at one time in high favour at the court of Philip Augustus, and in later years as one of the most ardent teachers of the Albigensian Crusade. The passage, a part of which has been often quoted, inserted in the Chronicle under the year 720, and runs in English thus :

Helin-  
and's  
Chronicle

‘ At this time a certain marvellous vision was revealed by an angel to a certain hermit in Britain concerning S. Joseph, the decurion who posed from the cross the Body of Our Lord, well as concerning the paten or dish in the which Our Lord supped with His disciples, whereof the history was written out by the said hermit and is called “Of the Graal” (*de adali*). Now, a platter, broad and somewhat deep, is called in French *gradalis* or *gradale*, wherein costly meats with their sauce are wont to be set before rich folk by degrees (*gradatim*) morsel after another in divers orders, and in vulgar speech it is called *graalz*, for that is grateful and acceptable to him that eateth therein, as well for that which containeth the ideal, for that haply it is of silver or other

Date of Helinand precious material, as for the contents thereof, to wit, the manifold courses of costly meats I have not been able to find this history written in Latin, but it is in the possession of certain noblemen written in French only, nor, as they say, can it easily be found complete. This, however, I have not hitherto been able to obtain from any person so as to read it with attention. As soon as I can do so, I will translate into Latin such passages as are more useful and more likely to be true.' <sup>1</sup>

A comparison of this passage with the Introduction to the present work <sup>2</sup> leaves no doubt that Helinand here refers to this Book of the Graal, which cannot therefore be of a later date than that at which he made this entry in his chronicle. At the same time, the difficulty he experienced in obtaining even the loan of the volume shows that the work had at that time been only lately written, as in the course of a few years, copies of a book so widely popular

<sup>1</sup> Helinandi Op. Ed. Migne. *Patrol.* Vol. ccxii. col. 814. The former part of the passage is quoted with due acknowledgment by Vincent of Beauvais. *Spec. Hist.* B. xxiii. c. 147. Vincent, however, spells the French word 'grail,' and, by turning Helinand's *nec* into *now*, makes him say that the French work can *now* easily be found complete. Vincent finished his *Speculum Historiale* in 1244. B. xxi. c. 105.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. i. p. 1, etc.

must have been comparatively common. The date, therefore, at which Helinand's Chronicle was written determines approximately that of the Book of the Graal. Vincent of Beauvais

In its present state, the Chronicle comes to an end with a notice of the capture of Constantinople by the French in 1204, and it has been hastily assumed that Helinand's labours as a chronicler must have closed in that year. As a matter of fact they had not then even begun. At that time Helinand was still a courtly troubadour, and had not yet entered on the monastic career during which his Chronicle was compiled. He was certainly living as late as 1229, and preached a sermon, which assuredly shows no signs of mental decrepitude, in that year at a synod in Toulouse.<sup>1</sup>

Fortunately a passage in the *Speculum Historiale* of Vincent of Beauvais, himself a younger contemporary and probably a personal acquaintance of Helinand, throws considerable light on

<sup>1</sup> Sermon xxvi., printed in Migne, u. s. col. 692. It has been doubted whether this sermon, preached in the church of S. Jacques, was addressed to the Council held at Toulouse in 1219, or to the one held in 1229, but a perusal of the sermon itself decides the question. It is wholly irrelevant to the topics discussed at the former gathering, while it is one continued commentary on the business transacted at the latter. See also Dom Brial, *Hist. Litt. de la France*, xviii. 92.

**Bishop** the real date of Helinand's Chronicle. After  
**Guarin** recounting certain matters connected with the early years of the thirteenth century, the last date mentioned being 1209, Vincent proceeds:—

‘In those times, in the diocese of Beauvais, was Helinand monk of Froid-mont, a man religious and distinguished for his eloquence, who also composed those verses on Death in our vulgar tongue which are publicly read, so elegantly and so usefully that the subject is laid open clearer than the light. He also diligently digested into a certain huge volume a Chronicle from the beginning of the world down to his own time. But in truth this work was dissipated and dispersed in such sort that it is nowhere to be found entire. For it is reported that the said Helinand lent certain sheets of the said work to one of his familiars, to wit, Guarin, Lord Bishop of Senlis of good memory, and thus, whether through forgetfulness or negligence or some other cause, lost them altogether. From this work, however, as far as I have been able to find it, I have inserted many passages in this work of mine own also.’

It will thus be seen that about 1209, Helinand became a monk at Froid-mont, and it is exceedingly improbable that any portion of his Chronicle was written before that date. On the other hand, his ‘familiar’ Guarin only

became Bishop of Senlis in 1214, and died in 1227,<sup>1</sup> so that it is certain Helinand wrote the last part of his Chronicle not later than the last-mentioned year. The limits of time, therefore, between which the Chronicle was written are clearly circumscribed; and if it is impossible to define the exact year in which this particular entry was made, it is not, I fancy, beyond the legitimate bounds of critical conjecture.

On the first page of the Romance, Helinand read that an Angel had appeared to a certain hermit in Britain and revealed to him the history of the Holy Graal. In transferring the record of this event to his Chronicle, he was compelled by the exigencies of his system, which required the insertion of every event recorded under some particular year, to assign a date to the occurrence. A vague 'five hundred years ago' would be likely to suggest itself as an appropriate time at which the occurrence might be supposed to have taken place; and if he were writing in 1220, the revelation to the hermit would thus naturally be relegated to the year 720, the year under which the entry actually appears. This, of course, is pure guesswork, but the fact remains that the Chronicle was written in or about 1220, and the Book of the Graal not long before it.

<sup>1</sup> *De Mas Latrie. Trés. de Chron.*, col. 1488.

**Master Blihis** The name of the author is nowhere recorded. He may possibly be referred to in the 'Elucidation' prefixed to the rhymed version of *Percival le Gallois* under the name of 'Mast Blihis,' but this vague and tantalising pseudonym affords no hint of his real identity.<sup>1</sup> Whoever he may have been, I hope that I am not misled by a translator's natural partiality for the author he translates in assigning him a foremost rank among the masters of mediæval prose romance.

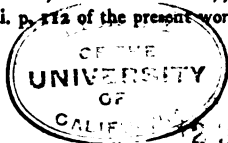
With these testimonies to its age and genuineness, I commend the Book of the Graal to all who love to read of King Arthur and his knights of the Table Round. They will find here printed in English for the first time what I take to be in all good faith the original story of Sir Perceval and the Holy Graal, whole and incorrupt as it left the hands of its first author.

SEBASTIAN EVANS.

COOMBE LEA, BICKLEY, KENT,

January 1898.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Potvin, *P. le G.* ii. 1 and 7, with vol. i. p. 131 and vol. ii. p. 112 of the present work.



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